

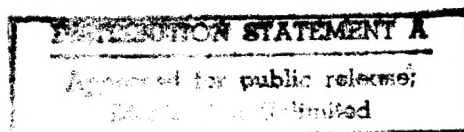
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# Latin America Report

AN URBAN EXPERIENCE -  
A TUPAMAROS ACCOUNT



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[Introduction, excerpts and epilogue from book "Tupamaro Exploits: An Urban Guerrilla Experience," by the Tupamaros, Editorial Revolucion, 256 pages]

[Text] Introduction

A great deal has been written about the Uruguayan National Liberation Movement (commonly known as the Tupamaros) because it is an important urban guerrilla experience that developed in a small Latin American country of scarcely 3 million inhabitants.

Nevertheless, "Actas Tupamaros" is of special significance because it is not the analysis of an experience in struggle by experts, but rather, a book written by the protagonists themselves. For the first time, the Tupamaros speak of themselves -- that is, of the operations in which they have participated. That is why this is an irreplaceable work. It is *their* book.

These accounts were written under difficult conditions, underground or in prison, and then gathered together, whence the inevitable lack of continuity, of uniformity of tone, the awkward style. And yet, far from detracting from the quality of the work, all these elements contribute to its worth, for these are documents expressed in a simple, common language, without systematic or general statements, documents that gather together and vividly recount experiences that are easily understood by anyone involved in a struggle.

The fact that the work was conceived and written during the period when the organization was at its peak may have given the book a certain boastfulness, but this in no way detracts from the ease of understanding the essential aspects of the MLN, given the general explanation of its basic theoretical principles, joined with the description of some of its most famous actions up until the end of 1970.

The Tupamaros came into being in 1961-1962 as a people's movement. They expanded and developed their action in Uruguay for 9 years. According to estimates of the Armed Forces themselves, they succeeded in organizing some 10,000 persons.

The organization was made up of people from different social and political backgrounds: Marxists and Catholics, trade unionists and students, white-collar and farm workers, military and civilians. This was no obstacle to the forging of a solid organization awareness and collective morality. More than any other revolutionary organization, the Tupamaros integrated a large number of women into their fighting ranks and on an equal footing.

Explaining this new morality that it was necessary to forge, one imprisoned Tupamaro leader spoke of the "proletarianization of new recruits" in referring to the education and background of new members: "It is a matter of imbuing the new member with a feeling of dependency on the group. The awareness that he is not self-sufficient, that the others are indispensable to him, this is called 'proletarianization' because it is the very feeling of the worker. The mode of production under the capitalist system generates in the worker the awareness of his relationship with other workers. He knows that his product is not the work of his individual effort, but rather, the result of the collective effort. The petty bourgeois feels self-sufficient."

In 1972, the Tupamaros were heavily attacked and suffered a crushing defeat before they had put together an adequate infrastructure or the means to develop a head-on struggle against the police and military alliance governing the country.

Conflicting hypotheses have been advanced to explain the reasons for such a defeat: a limited base among the working people, despite the effort made by the organization itself, which did not succeed in consolidating the political strength of its leadership sufficiently.

All in all, the pages engraved by these revolutionaries with their own accounts seem to us to be of unquestionable worth and great usefulness.

In an introductory comment on "Actas Tupamaras," Regis Debray, one of the best-known theorists of Latin American guerrilla warfare, wrote that "the Tupamaros have all the credentials worthy of our admiration and solidarity -- wherever we may be from or wherever we may work -- even if they do not seek it and are sufficient unto themselves.

"Revolutionaries everywhere owe a historic debt to the Tupamaros. It is necessary to learn from them with the same modesty they used in refraining from preaching to anyone.

"This book-testimony is also, in spite of itself, a lesson to be passed on and learned."

## Tactics Employed by Urban Guerrillas

Urban guerrilla warfare as an instrument of armed struggle has been widely used through history by correlatively smaller forces in confronting forces much larger in size. A basically tactical conception, it was during the Chinese revolution that it grew into a strategic-military conception and in a great period of struggle, bore the entire burden of the war. In the Cuban revolution, guerrilla warfare was not only a strategic-tactical conception of the armed struggle, but comprised the main instrument for the politicization and growing awareness of the masses. Guerrilla warfare cannot exist without popular support and it is precisely in the search for that support that guerrilla warfare, in the long period of its existence as a revolutionary instrument, has essentially political objectives. This strategic-political conception of guerrilla warfare has been and is the conception valid for the urban guerrilla warfare of the MLN. This has not prevented guerrillas from taking simultaneous action in the purely military field. On the contrary, it is in this area that the tactical elements of a political and military strategy are applied. The guerrilla struggle is essentially a struggle of harassment. Since its main objective is to change the ratio of forces from unfavorable to favorable, it pursues two tactical objectives: 1) to grow, and 2) to weaken the enemy. The first objective has political grounds. The second is based on political and military aspects. A basic principle of guerrilla strategy and tactics is harassment. Harassment wears down the enemy, not only because it annihilates its live forces, but rather, because it demoralizes him and advances the objective and subjective conditions for the revolution. Since the revolution can have multiple objectives, the whole apparatus of the regime is shaken and convulsed. Its repressive strength, the judicial structure, mercenary press and all the instruments that sustain and work for the system are in constant turmoil, which prevents the reactionary government from freely exercising its functions.

A kind of double revolutionary power co-exists along with the power of the regime.

## Choice of Tactical Means for Developing This Strategy

Urban guerrilla warfare is characterized by having practically all the enemy's objectives within its range for a surprise attack. For example, ambushing and annihilating enemy contingents -- an arduous maneuver for rural guerrillas -- would be a simple daily operation for urban guerrillas. All agents of the regime, beginning with the president and his ministers, are exposed to an annihilatory ambush of urban guerrillas. Their systems of communication, their strategic facilities, are all within the range of the explosives of an urban movement that will not hesitate to sacrifice human lives to achieve its purposes. However, urban guerrillas do not make indiscriminate use of these means which their position within the enemy offers. Their action is contingent upon their strategic (military and political) objectives such as: not committing all forces to a single action in order not to compromise continuity in time; not rashly engaging in excessively bloody actions at times when the people's awareness is not sufficiently roused against the regime or indignant over its crimes.



There are no general norms valid for all times with respect to the choice of tactical means. It is also counterproductive to use certain very drastic means during a period of preparation of revolutionary conditions or to fail to use them in situations of violence or during a phase of definition of the struggle. All guerrilla warfare, but especially urban guerrilla warfare, which involves multitudes of people and close contact with the masses, is political warfare. Any mistake in the use of tactical means, any action whose objectives are not very clearly explained, can mean great setbacks in the supreme strategic objectives. This means that the election of tactical means requires a precise evaluation of socio-political, geographic and other conditions so that their utilization will not turn out to be counterproductive. Their validity is always related to time and place.

The MLN has tried different tactical means and has arrived at certain conclusions.

#### 1. Sabotage

Three kinds of sabotage must be distinguished: 1) those signifying the destruction of a source of work, with the loss of the jobs of a large group of workers, or hurting a large sector of the population; 2) those which only harm some capitalist or the government, without directly affecting the people; and 3) the sabotaging of military facilities.

Naturally, the second and third types have wider acceptance among the people than the first. However, in general, sabotage of any kind is not as well received as other types of revolutionary action among the population during periods in which guerrilla warfare has not entered its phase of generalized fighting, in which the destruction of the enemy apparatus is justified by tactical reasons. In such a phase, one can see, behind the cutting of telephone or electric lines or the blowing up of railroads or bridges where enemy troops pass, attempts making it necessary to scatter the enemy, the production of certain strategic articles, military bases, and so on -- that is, when the struggle takes on a dramatic tone. This is also the case of a foreign invasion, in which sabotage becomes an extreme, legitimate recourse. Naturally, even in such circumstances, sabotage must be suited to the objective proposed. In other words, it must have the dimensions and continuity needed to upset the operations of the enemy. At a specific point in the period of harassment, it may still be negative to cut telephone, electric, rail lines, and so on, since the regime may repair them. To the people, these operations may look like a crude boycott without any strategic objective and in some cases, the government may appear to be restoring a public service of which they were deprived by the guerrillas. The people will accept sabotage that only harms the government or the armed forces or some capitalist, for example, sabotage carried out against official buildings, military or police facilities, warehouses of manufactured goods, and so on. It serves to point up the repudiation of some concrete attitude of the direct victim and is valid as long as the objectives remain clear. Two other secondary disadvantages of sabotage must be mentioned: It tends to strengthen the false image of the "terrorist" which the government and its press wish to create with respect to guerrillas (in order to counter

this effect, sabotage must take the form of a commando operation, taking the objective before destroying it) and can often not be carried out without threatening contiguous areas (possibly buildings), which creates a feeling of fear of guerrilla actions among the population in general. In general, sabotage operations should be explained as well as possible through propaganda, whence the need for an adequate apparatus to make it effective and at the same time counter the campaign that will be waged by the regime's press, taking advantage of the negative aspects of this type of action.

## 2. Attacks on Members of the Repressive Forces

As we explained, urban guerrilla warfare has a choice of possibilities for carrying out the most frequently used tactic of rural guerrillas: the ambush of enemy armed forces.

Ambush, surprise attacks on armed contingents in order to annihilate them or capture them and take away their weapons, are widely used recourses. Attacks on the repressive forces of the regime are surely the most direct form of harassment. They strike at the very pillar of the regime, the apparatus serving as its buttress. The wearing away of the armed forces may have as its result their automatic fall.

Inasmuch as revolutionary war is a political war, its consequences must be properly analyzed before the tactic is used. For example, if there is well-founded hope that part of the armed forces might go over to the patriotic cause, then one must measure whether harassment can help to achieve this goal or whether, on the other hand, it might throw that group into the arms of the enemy. Harassment transferred to the urban environment has an enormous psychological effect on the members of the armed forces. When they are the ones to take the enemy bullets, they begin to reason politically and to wonder whether it is truly worth the trouble to get killed for the regime. They may even become interested in the guerrilla program and come to see themselves as mere instruments of a policy. Actually, they "got in" -- that is, they entered the ranks of the police or the army because they had to work somewhere, believing that it was a question of defending their country or fighting crime. When they see themselves in another situation, their immediate reactions may vary: a collective demand for better pay, special statutes, a refusal to carry out certain orders. In other words, in moving from the status of passive agents to active agents of an unjust regime, they begin to become aware of their role in social struggles, at which time one of two things may occur: Either, as we said, they will agree to continue to defend the oligarchic regime (after receiving better pay and working conditions in order to do this "dirty job") or they will refuse to do it and go over to the guerrillas, which means breaking away from, and even the decline of, the armed forces. This favorable effect may be ruined by poor tactical use of the ambush on repressive forces. Once again the political evaluation we called for in the case of sabotage is necessary: An ambush with killing in cold blood, at a time when no "quota of violence" has opened up for us or when the struggle has not yet taken on the drama of a civil war situation, could have effects opposite those anticipated. The soldier and policeman will feel unjustly attacked and will

react motivated by indignation, by esprit de corps, rather than out of support for the regime. It is very important to see whether the member of the armed forces has already become accustomed to the idea that he is participating in a civil war or sincerely believes that he is in a fight against bank robbers or the traditional "mad bombers." Even in this phase during which such a way of thinking has not yet been achieved, but when actions have reached the degree of drama of which we were speaking, the attack must be made through the tactic now commonly called "indirect approximation." This consists in moving to attack the enemy's objectives without considering the police and soldiers defending them. In other words, the attack in this phase is not directed at the person of the agent, but rather, at the objective he is guarding, meaning that the agent is attacked indirectly. Although the psychological objectives relating to the soldier and policeman are also achieved, it is not through an attack that might appear unjust. A form of "indirect approximation" is the disarming of agents.

As long as this operation has a guarantee that it can be carried out without killing (capture with great numerical superiority and the effect of surprise may be included in this tactic), there is still a risk and it is unwise to the extent that it constitutes an exaggerated act of aggression compared with the relative unimportance of the objective. In other words, the tactic of "indirect approximation" requires important and clear objectives, as well as proportionate means.

### 3. Reprisals

For the agents of the regime, the explanation of why they are attacked becomes crystal clear when the attack comes in response to an unjust act committed by them, for example, in response to torture, murder, an arbitrary judicial ruling, arbitrary layoffs by management or the government hierarchy, and so on. It is also much easier for the people to assimilate revolutionary violence, even in the early phases of guerrilla warfare, when that violence appears in response to an arbitrary act of the enemy. With respect to the police and the army in particular, one can say that even more than indirect approximation, reprisals make it possible to exercise the pressure of revolutionary violence on them, not counting the total justification of such actions.

But in addition, reprisals achieve another strategic objective: It cuts the regime's claws. Any revolutionary movement that considers itself to possess the reserves needed to meet escalating violence (in which it has a probability of winning because it uses the tactic of ambush, while the enemy is visible) must impose its own laws of war through reprisals. What it must do is be ready to respond with all due speed to any arbitrary act of the enemy and, for this purpose, complete a thorough study of possible objectives. But in addition to seeking the eradication of torture and killing, urban guerrillas may have a more ambitious goal, also to be achieved through reprisals: to punish the police, army, government officials, the oligarchy and the representatives of imperialism and odious regimes for every prisoner they take and every revolutionary they kill (even in combat), and so on, and punish judges for every trial, newsmen for their slander, witnesses and informers for their statements against revolutionaries and representatives of the government and capitalism for their measures against the people.

In other words, not only can the guerrillas cut the regime's claws, but they can cut off its entire paw! This creates insoluble problems for the government in its task of carrying out its plans and repression against the people, meaning that it is a political way of carrying out a superior form of harassment.

Finally, it should be noted that reprisals should be measured and in keeping with the arbitrary action of the enemy to be punished. Disproportionate reprisals are also unwise.

#### 4. Bombings

This type of operation yields poor political results for guerrillas. Exploding time bombs in public places may cause needless victims among the population. If what is sought is material damage, then it is preferable to take the premises in question, thereby obtaining a superior effect and avoiding many dangers. If what is sought is to attack specific persons, then it is preferable to capture them and act directly.

#### 5. Kidnaping and Revolutionary Jails

This is another tactic used in a limited fashion by urban guerrillas. The notorious kidnapings are but a modest sample of the incalculable possibilities offered by revolutionary jailing, where officials connected with the regime, the constables of repression, foreign representatives and key men in the regime in general can be held for an unspecified length of time. With them in the hands of the guerrillas, one can guarantee the physical integrity of imprisoned revolutionaries and some moderation in the proceedings of repression. This results in a tremendous scattering of forces, which must be assigned to take care of each and every official at home and in the street. The enemy is forced to make an enormous and continuing effort to find persons being held prisoner by the guerrillas, without mentioning the tremendous dilemma and pressure exerted every time an exchange is proposed.

Kidnaping and revolutionary jailing can also be used against recalcitrant management during disputes with personnel. Revolutionary prisons, which can be one of the ways of carrying out reprisals, have demonstrated in practice that they are one of the most effective ways of upsetting the plans of the regime, more effective than other more traditional means such as harassment.

#### 6. Supply Operations

Much more than rural guerrillas, urban guerrillas need a solid and constantly renewed infrastructure of buildings, technical materials and other resources in order to be able to hold out while popular support cannot supply much or provide such things through legal means. In this area of guerrilla warfare in urban areas, the principle is the same as that applied by rural guerrillas concerning weapons: to take from the enemy. Given the characteristics of the struggle, premises and vehicles become strategic elements as important as arms.

From the time preparations begin to go into action, guerrillas must face the problem of the expropriation of large amounts of money because money can buy the Sierra Maestra of urban guerrilla warfare -- that is, the safe houses, workshops, technical equipment and sometimes even weapons. In addition, the problem of expropriating strategic supplies such as machinery, vehicles and arms can also be faced. During the transition from the period of preparations to that of guerrilla action, it may be difficult to make the people understand that such expropriations, traditionally viewed as reprehensible, carried out by criminals, are the legitimate resources of a revolutionary movement. The first requirement that must be strictly complied with in order to ease such understanding is that of expropriating only from capitalists or the government, emphasizing this principle with the return of property or repayment of damage when the interests of workers are affected. The same is true of vehicles and other supplies and provisions. Understanding will flow when guerrillas move into direct action of harassing the regime.

Offensive guerrilla warfare justifies expropriations because it demonstrates the existence of a costly armed structure.

#### 7. Capture of Residences (Raids)

The repression has used raids of homes of revolutionaries as one way of taking intimidation into their homes and to their families. Urban guerrilla warfare can do the same with the residences of members of the repression, the government, the oligarchy, foreign imperialists, and so on. This tactical weapon may become one of the main elements of harassment, taking such war to the very peaceful and untouchable mansions of officials of the regime. The enemy will then have to scatter out in order to guard thousands of targets. Regime officials will be subjected to a kind of underground life, also filled with worry; they will see their movements restricted by constant guards, even in their own homes.

This is a situation very different from that of the good old days when the oligarchy dispatched its soldiers to fight against distant enemies, on land or in the faraway mountains. The capture of domiciles can be used as a reprisal, a form of demonstrating their vulnerability to the agents of the regime (police, military, judges) and imbue them with the idea of the "double power" created by a second armed apparatus in the country, as vigilant and ready to castigate the excesses as the person who pays their wages.

#### 8. Armed Propaganda

Guerrillas basically express themselves through their armed actions, although they sometimes use other means of communication with the people such as pamphlets, radio interviews, interference in radios and television reception. One of the means of armed propaganda is the capture of radio or television broadcasting stations in order to transmit proclamations. Another form that has yielded good results is the capture of a factory and a meeting with all personnel -- making proper distinctions in treatment between personnel associated with management and the workers -- in order to hold a dialogue with them.



A guerrilla movement can also take over movie theaters, showing slides or film clips or using the theater sound system to address the public. Leaflets can be distributed. Vehicles with loudspeaker systems can be commandeered and while the drivers are held, the vehicles may be left in a specific place as tapes are played. Threats of explosions will be written on vehicle doors in order to draw out the duration of the operation.

There are other types of propaganda action such as the distribution of groceries, expropriated from the vehicles hauling them or from warehouses. Such supplies will go to the poorest groups of the population.

However, in general, the best "armed propaganda" is that which emerges from great military actions. No opportunity must be missed of placing the stamp of the guerrilla ideology on even the slightest detail: the treatment of workers, attention to anyone who might be suffering from a nervous crisis, and so on. Returning money to employees, if it was erroneously taken along with that of the capitalist, reparation of the harm unwittingly done to a humble person, will be more useful in defining the guerrilla ideology to the people than the most eloquent manifesto. This will also be more effective in breaking down the way of thinking of honest representatives of the repression who might still believe that they are fighting criminals.

If there is any one thing requiring good political judgment, it is the use of armed propaganda. A guerrilla movement that misuses propaganda action to the detriment of basic military actions loses face in the people's thinking (in other words, obtains the opposite result of that sought, giving the false impression that publicity rather than the defeat of the enemy is sought). Armed propaganda takes on special importance in certain phases, such as becoming known at the very beginning of guerrilla warfare. It is also of special importance when it comes time to clarify positions to the people during those periods when drastic measures are adopted, measures that are not sufficiently explained with respect to their purposes and that are consequently difficult to understand for the average person.

#### Woman's Role

As a social being in a situation where she witnesses and experiences injustice, the woman makes the political commitment that the times demand, a commitment which, transcending education, culture, sex, and other factors, stems from the very depths of her being: the awareness that she is creating her own reality, the awareness of her need to be a revolutionary. In this sense, the woman is just another soldier with all the possibilities of contributing to and helping develop the revolutionary process underway. Not without a struggle, the MLN now offers a place for women to work militantly without prejudice and only in terms of what is best for the revolution. We say not without a struggle, very much aware of the process which that place of militancy undergoes in time. Indeed, in order to become just another soldier, the woman had to overcome and is still overcoming difficulties.

Above all, the capitalist society assigns women a role and educates them for that role. There are few redeeming factors in that education enabling an

average woman from Uruguayan society to become a member of a political-military organization. Ranging from her neglected physical training to her dependency for solving practical problems (economic, family, mechanical and so on), her creativity, initiative and even aggressiveness are gradually limited in time. The first difficulty holding her back and resulting in her alienation is the need to break with an upbringing and a culture that turn her into a spectator of a history made by men. Once within the political-military organization, she must create and develop internally the conditions making it possible for these limitations, inherent in her status as a woman in this society, to be overcome.

It is of prime importance that the militant woman find in her own revolutionary comrades the proper understanding of her failings and deficiencies so that her work as a militant may be effective, so that teamwork may overcome prejudice, and so that there may no longer be men's work or women's work, but only the necessary complementation demanded by any revolutionary task.

In short, the woman has to wage two battles: the first, hastening her political integration, making the commitment and going against her own education; the second, once the commitment is made, to overcome any deficiency so as to serve the revolution with all her potential.

The path followed by many women has cleared the way so that while the double battle still takes place in every new commitment, we can say that in the MLN, the woman now has a well-defined place. This process, simultaneously accomplished on two fronts, contributes to the firmness of her commitment. We now therefore have a disciplined, hard-working and rational woman who is skillful in the face of repression, rooted in the people, with broad possibilities in political work, not as bold or with the same initiative in the strictly military field for the time being, but in general, what can be called a good soldier.

Because it has to be waged in the very ranks of the enemy, the urban struggle has demonstrated in practice the positive aspect of having certain tasks performed by women. Without claiming to exhaust the list of those tasks, we might mention a few.

#### Liaison

Because they are women, our comrades of all ages are very effective in carrying messages and objects. Their appearance, modified by clothing, personal grooming, and so on, means that they can adapt to different physical or social areas, easily copying their ways, which often enables them to foil the action of the agents of repression. An inoffensive appearance, joined with presence of mind, the fruit of conviction and commitment, has often solved problems posed by clandestine operations and done so very effectively and at little cost. Despite the fact that this factor is known to the enemy, it has nevertheless constituted a very important asset for the organization because the enemy is a victim of the prejudice that he carries deep within him concerning women.



## Coverup

No matter where a center of the organization is located in the city, the presence of a woman is indispensable.

It is the woman who makes such a place look like every other house around it. Her tasks as a "housewife" enable her to relate to neighbors and thereby determine possible enemies nearby. When she goes shopping, she learns the normal movement of the area, detects any strange movements. All of this helps strengthen security mechanisms, which are always inadequate in urban guerrilla warfare.

## Member of Service Teams

On these teams, the logistical bases of the armed struggle, women have a real possibility of applying knowledge and techniques acquired in the factories, universities, and so on, to the development of guerrilla warfare. In their silent, painstaking, constant, patient work, women have occupied and continue to occupy their place in the struggle.

## Member of Action Teams

Today, nearly all action teams have a woman among their members. Long practice has demonstrated the advantages of such a solution. In the beginning, women participated in military actions only under certain circumstances and in order to fulfill a specific purpose. At the present time, they do so during the stages of preparation, planning and execution of action, thus acquiring overall military experience, which makes it possible to take advantage of their personal condition in the military sphere as well. In order to obtain information or plan an action, under certain circumstances, women have better possibilities of gaining access to different places. Their carefulness in planning generally means a valuable contribution. During the phase of execution, because of her discipline and team spirit, the woman is a good soldier.

## Political Work

In this aspect, women have made different contributions: 1) organizing work at all levels, whether internally or on the mass front; 2) orienting new members of the MLN in their political training, transmitting the basic criteria of underground operations with richness, prolixity and discipline.

Finally but not least importantly, the woman is the person who, by virtue of her presence alone, constantly contributes a very important element to the unity and camaraderie of revolutionaries. The feminine touch which Che mentions in guerrilla warfare (see note) can be seen on different levels, whether in a meal that a woman can fix in her unique, timely way; whether in a tender gesture that relieves tension caused by the struggle; whether in her constant attitude of human closeness that helps those around her to further the identification of comrades with the revolution. Often her tenderness and that of her children permeate the emotional world of those with whom they live. And this attitude -- to the extent that these facts are not part of a task

imposed, but rather, accepted by the militant woman -- is the most eloquent manifestation of the total commitment which the Uruguayan woman has made at this stage in the revolutionary process.

#### Four Anecdotes

1. The "uncompleted" operation. It was a weekday morning. Traveling on a city bus among all the other passengers were two young men and a woman, young also. There was nothing to distinguish them from the others, although the three were members of the MLN. Very early that morning, they had unsuccessfully tried to disarm some agent of the repression, but for different reasons, their attempts failed. When time ran out at the end of the hour set as the limit, they were returning, unhappy over having failed to complete their task. For reasons of safety, they were traveling separately, in different seats. Suddenly, a policeman got on the bus and was rapidly noticed by the youngest of the three. He sought the eyes of his comrades. The leader and the woman quickly read the question in his eyes and also quickly agreed to the proposal. Thus, without having previously planned it, they went into action: One went up to the policeman, the other to the door and the rest of the passengers, while the woman took care of the driver. The action was carried out; the team had functioned. The task was completed, by two men and a woman.

2. The "swimmer." In a sweep operation, one of those in which the agents of the repression surround a few blocks and search every house one by one, the police arrived at the nearby corner of a house which, while functioning as a "department" of the organization, was also the home of a female comrade. A male comrade warned her of the proximity of the police. With great speed and determination, she packed a duffle bag with important organization materials, which she covered with a towel left sticking out intentionally. When she went out, she saw that uniformed officers were making their inspections 20 meters from her door. The pretty young woman walked indifferently with her bag among the people who had gathered on the sidewalk to watch. She soon noticed that someone was following her: It was one of the many "patrols" who move about during the sweep to observe the movements of the residents. Although she walked slowly, her thoughts moved rapidly. When she reached the bus stop, he looked at her and smiled. "Where are you going, sweetheart?" "To the Y to swim awhile" (the towel protruding from the bag confirmed her words). "What a pity I'm on duty. What time will you get out? I'll wait for you." The young lady got on the bus. With the bag, important material of a "department" had been saved, along with her freedom.

3. A "capricious" woman. Following an armed confrontation, a comrade who was wounded had to be taken to the city which was far away. Although the coastal road is a good way, on foot and with a wounded person, progress is slow. It becomes necessary to obtain a vehicle approaching the comrades in order to reach the department border before it closes. The man and the woman accompanying the wounded person decide to use a stratagem to obtain the vehicle. The woman pretends she is a poor lady needing emergency care. The nice man to whose house they go is willing to help them; the illness of the woman causes the wounded man to go unnoticed.

As they approach the departmental border, it becomes necessary to stop the vehicle before reaching the guard post in order to avoid problems in case he has been alerted. A new problem thus arises. The generous driver wants to complete the trip at all costs, taking the lady to the hospital. The "absurd" part about it is that the poor woman stubbornly insists on being seen by her father-in-law who lives "precisely there," 50 meters before the station. She argues with the nice gentleman, grows ever more obstinate and ends up prevailing. The comrades thus find the way to avoid the border and are safe.

4. Silvito. In an apartment that looks like any other lives a couple and the "brother" of the husband. The woman is a "teacher" who, while working and doing her shopping, makes friends with the neighbors. Among the neighbors is a couple with three children, one of which is Silvito, an eight-year-old boy.

The "teacher" begins to notice that every time she is to hold meetings with her comrades in the area, Silvito appears out of nowhere. Although the little boy greets her timidly, she knows that "little pitchers have big ears." When the incident is repeated over and over, her comrades comment on the circumstances and their repetition.

One day, while talking with Silvito's mother, she learns of a dialogue that is often repeated between the mother and the child. "Where are you going, Silvito?" "I am going to take care of the teacher." The "teacher" finally understands her casual encounters with the child who, because he is the son of a worker, knows what repression is, even in his own home. She also understands the meaning of the child's attentive silence during the talks between the "teacher" and his parents.

#### Some Answers

In our country and, it is said, in Latin America as well, people have many questions about the Tupamaros.

Some of them, perhaps the first to arise, are these: How are the existence of the Tupamaros and their struggle in Uruguay explained? What does it mean? How did they come about? What are their prospects?

We are at war and until it ends, secrecy must shroud much information and many ideas because today, the war approaching will be total and ideas will be fearful weapons, if not the best. That is why it is sometimes difficult to provide public answers to these questions in a complete and satisfactory way. Many data that we would have to use to do so continue to be the exclusive patrimony of our militants. Nevertheless, we can try to give some answers.

#### Appearances

The "Switzerland of America": That is the image people had of Uruguay and that many still have. Uruguay has neither jungles nor mountains nor many peasants. Uruguay is small, "democratic," cultivated. The people live in the cities. They live well and enjoy progressive social legislation. Uruguay

has a large and optimistic middle class. "Nothing happens" in Uruguay. It is the exception in Latin America. All of this was true up to a certain point. It was a precarious truth, an apparent reality, because it is also true that all of this is coming down, had to come down. The appearances confused and still confuse many, inside and outside of the country. In addition, the ruling classes use every possible means to maintain that image of Uruguay before the people and the world. They use it to confuse and control, to conceal the sad facts.

The truth is that for several years now (since 1955), Uruguay has been in a profound crisis. The capitalist system cannot go on, is exhausted. Large landholdings made cattle raising, the country's main source of wealth, stagnant. Industry is paralyzed or even worse, declining.

The worst -- or best -- of all is that the current regime offers no way out, meaning that the only solution shaping up with increasing clarity is revolution, a far-reaching change in all structures. On the feeble basis of a favorable but circumstantial international situation (war, for example), cattle raising and considerable industrialization made it possible to achieve prosperity led to the possibility of building that entire superstructure which painted us as an exception in Latin America, the Switzerland of America. When those international circumstances disappeared, the hour of truth came for us. The superstructure became untenable and began to collapse, the fall gaining speed and ending in a resounding crash. The crash was even more deafening when one realizes that the structure involved was something greatly defended, greatly utilized and greatly publicized by the ruling classes, and it is precisely they who now have to hasten the collapse in order to maintain their positions.

But in the minds of the people, the beloved old structures are also collapsing. One could not expect the masses to parimoniously accept the loss of their conquests, their impoverishment in order to pay for the damage and preserve the privileges of the ruling class. The latter presumed they would and hastened to embark upon an unprecedented war of repression.

Thus it was that the cities turned into jungles and the nation mountains. The working class, students, the poor and even the middle class -- lower and lower middle -- began to play the role fulfilled in other countries by the peasants.

With this general picture, one must always bear these facts in mind if one wants to understand why the Tupamaros exist in Uruguay. But one must also bear them in mind if one wants to understand the Tupamaros themselves, our way of military and political action, our style.

In short, Uruguay has its specific, individual laws that cannot be compared with those of the rest of America and the world. Consequently, in order to survive and prosper, we Tupamaros have our own.

## Schemes

In the ranks of revolutionaries, there very often exists a spontaneous tendency toward imitation, especially in our country, where for many years we have lived with our windows open to the outside, attentive, in different spheres of human activity, to anything happening abroad and ready to adopt it or value it highly. In recent years, we have been "on the outside looking in," as they say. It is naturally especially tempting for revolutionaries to copy victorious experiences and try to imitate them. This is the result of mental laziness, of a lack of clear and immediate prospects, of the attraction of such histories, but whatever the case, it does happen.

Given the so-called exceptional nature of our country which has been taking shape for some time, even in the most progressive sectors of our people, the phenomenon on which we were commenting assumes the form of far-reaching and important solidarity movements: with the Spanish Republic, Guatemala, Cuba, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, with prisoners and the persecuted in other lands, and so on.

It is logical for this to be the case inasmuch as here, for the time being, "nothing was ever going to happen." Consequently, it was our duty to help those struggling in their own lands, where things could happen.

Even as late as the end of 1967, when something was indeed going on here and when it was obvious that something big was on the horizon, there were still propelling theories about going somewhere else to fight. Or else they continued to hand us the role of serving as a calm "base" for our comrades in Latin America. And it was a nice base, especially with so much peace and tranquility! But the painful aspect of the phenomenon is that it consists in adopting the scheme of a triumphant revolution and trying to apply it here with some or no modification. Painful also because for years, revolutionary energies were paralyzed at best. In other cases, the error was tragic.

In general, the three stalest schemes were: the Russian Revolution, the Cuban Revolution and the Chinese Revolution. By order of their application to the Uruguayan scene, let us look at these schemes. However, it should be noted that we shall refer to "the schemes" deriving from those revolutions and not to what they truly were.

1) Russian Revolution: A scheme which began to be applied and which still persists, consisting in having a minority but select and discriminating party linked to the working class. Through a newspaper, strikes, parliamentary activity, statements, meetings, demonstrations, and so on, it will gradually, through patient and tenacious informational work, win over first the working class and then the majority of the population. At that time, the party leadership, through manifestos and slogans, general strikes and armed detachments, will strike the final blow to the regime, which will fall easily because it is also necessary that the latter be in the last stages of decomposition at that time. Of course, because this scheme is the oldest, it no longer occurs in precisely this way. It has undergone additions and modifications, such as the need to form a front and support guerrillas theoretically.

This scheme, which emerged linked to European social democracies at the beginning of the century as the result of different historical circumstances too long to explain here, has gradually evolved. It is applied by many leftist political forces in Latin America with legal organization, depending on whether or not it is possible to have it.

Obviously, such a scheme is not valid for our country's revolutionary purposes.

2) Cuban Revolution: This scheme consists in having a small group of revolutionaries willing to make the sacrifice gather weapons, organize a good system of supplies, propaganda, sabotage and recruiting in the cities, thus becoming a military and political "core" that will be a catalyst for and polarize all rebellion and grow inexorably until it becomes an army, wins over the population, defeats the enemy and takes power.

In recent years, this has been the most painful arrangement of all because it awakened the greatest enthusiasm. Consequently, it has often not even been applied correctly. Urban work has been neglected and little time has been devoted to the work of planning, conditioning, exploration, and so on. From the very beginning, it has been surrounded by an aura of facility and oversimplified.

In our country, it was especially paralyzing because since we have neither jungles nor mountains nor peasants, there could be no struggle. Its partisans reached the extreme of subordinating possibilities of revolutionary struggle to merely geographic factors. It is inapplicable in Uruguay.

3) Chinese Revolution: Similar to the previous scheme with the following basic additions: a priori need for a party, solid political work among the peasants and the creation of support bases in rural areas for the development and political and military triumph of the revolution. Because of the need for a party and solid work among the masses before any military-type possibilities, it paradoxically adopts certain forms similar to the first scheme. We do not believe it can be applied to Uruguayan conditions either.

In short, we do not reject the teachings of experience. On the contrary, what we do reject, deeming it to be a crass blunder, is the tendency to take only their outward form, leaving out the essential. Nor do we debate the application of these schemes -- even as such -- to other countries. We do say that they are not viable here. In no way do we discard the honesty and good will of the men who try to apply them. Many have fallen as heroes, also leaving many lessons to be learned. But we know many who turn these schemes into veritable theories of inaction in order to conceal their lack of courage and real faith in the masses, many who leave and hope that the revolution, with respect to sacrifice and blood, will make the "masses" entelechy and thus save their skin, many, in short, who engage in theorizing in order not to fight. Many "sell themselves a line" and justify it to themselves in long theoretical presentations that reach the point of a hoax. Many make correct and excellent "situational analyses" but fail when it comes time to derive operable conclusions. We reject the accusations of those who say that we have no theory because we do not apply the schemes they know, the very



same individuals who, by mere repetition, believe they are falling in line with the theories of others and thus justify themselves, who stand on form, lose the essence and never move into action, even in order to undeceive themselves. Fortunately, the enemy sometimes makes the same mistakes. As Lin Piao says: "Be prudent, study and carefully perfect the art of the struggle and adopt suitable forms of struggle in the concrete practice of revolution in each country and each specific problem in the struggle."

#### Concrete Analysis of Concrete Conditions

The MLN has a system of ideas that guides its action and that of its rank and file. Such a system may or may not be debated but it is true that we daily compare it with the most committed practice. It allows us to act, grow in quality and quantity and provides a special feature that few systems of ideas, in our country at least, have. That is perhaps its greatest virtue: Our theory is daily confronted with practice, is formulated in terms of it, is corrected based on it. It is not the result of idle speculation by men behind desks, but rather, comes out of the heat of battle, with its victories and defeats. It is not the fruit of an isolated genius, but rather, the patrimony of hundreds of militants who for years shaped it in the midst of struggle and its contradictions. It is not an inert arrangement. It is a living, palpitating system. It is not a facile, artificial imitation. It is as much our own as bitter mate.

Let us examine certain aspects, stating once again that they do not form a complete answer.

#### Heritage and Preparation

The birth of the MLN was spontaneous and began to occur in different spots almost at the same time. We could say that it was around 1962. It came out of the heart of the Uruguayan trade union movement and leftist parties.

Our country has inherited from the past a solid trade union movement with an old and authentic class tradition, unlike other American countries, where the trade union movement has been more or less manipulated by the ruling classes. In Uruguay, it is the exclusive product of the working classes. It developed and grew in strength in a continuous and coherent struggle from the beginning of the century up to the present time, thanks to the efforts of workers and in the midst of difficult struggles and sacrifices. This is a specific trait. Integrated from the very beginning through the trade union movement, we have received that heritage.

The Uruguayan left followed paths -- or chose them -- similar to those of the trade union movement. It developed starting at the beginning of the century. It has influenced the country's political history and would have done so even more if it were not for Batllism, which took many political banners from it. It has a history and a tradition full of teachings, sacrifices and contradictions, which we consequently inherit. We were born of it and separated from it in order to acquire our own personality. It was a slow process plagued with vicissitudes and accidents.



It is interesting to point out the ideas that originally marked the split and our budding personality. They were: 1) a negation of the possibility of gaining power by peaceful means; 2) the need for the armed struggle and its immediate planning; 3) action as a promoter of awareness and unit; and 4) the need to define our own political line through affirmative action and not the systematized negation of others.

These ideas brought together into an initially rather inorganic whole different groups from different backgrounds. Its main watchword at that time was: "Words separate us; action unites us." These groups moved into action and action united them, generating an organization and a theory.

Once again: First came action and practice, then theory. From that very moment, we resolved that moderation should mark our political conduct as a reaction to verbalism, but also as a form of interpreting and expressing the feelings of our people, already tired of promises, statements and purposes never fulfilled. Whence our language, our symbols, and the fact that we have always spoken after acting, never before. Whence our preference to establishing our line by affirming it through deeds. In the beginning, we learned the armed struggle in actual practice, not as after-dinner speculation, in the streets, through successes and failures that formed a difficult political and technical undertaking, one more difficult than we had assumed.

We discovered and resolved these difficulties through the blows we took. But two facts fundamentally helped resolve them: 1) That just as an emerging society inherits from the old its productive forces and their quality, it has cardinal influence on the new construction. As a political organization, we inherited from the falling society the skilled productive forces that enabled us to solve and continue solving the most important technical problems of the armed struggle (manufacture of weapons, explosives, making documents, disguises, health, information, communications, and so on). The high technical quality which the bourgeois press itself attributes to us is not the fruit of a strange and inexplicable virtue. It is quite simply the product of Uruguay, of the conditions prevailing there. The bourgeoisie is shocked and gets excited when it discovers that we use certain elements that we have, certain possibilities. It sees something diabolical in this and cannot imagine that they themselves helped build it.

That is also why it cannot understand how unsuspected professional people can be humble members of the MLN or how the son of so-and-so is sought by the police. It will never understand. Let there be no doubt about it: Every time the bourgeoisie is surprised, an ironic smile lurks in the shadows. They are not going to win out of fear. 2) That the vast majority of our initial energies were devoted to solving these problems. It implied a certain isolation. It was a time of silence and absolute clandestinity. It was the time that required the most faith in the line and the people, more discipline than any other period. It was a time of internal, painstaking work for a handful of people, without repercussions. It was a time of using every possible means to prevent the discovery of our existence. What a paradox! A political organization that tries to go unnoticed, a revolutionary army that strikes but does not claim its actions. It was a time of being taken prisoner and telling the

courts that we were common criminals. How different from that easy search for glory, uniforms and armbands prematurely used, incendiary manifestos published too soon, so much unnecessary noise! It was a time, finally, for less noise and more substance, but that is a source of an old accusation against the MLN: "They are cut off from the masses." That is not true. We were isolated from the members on the mass front previously in order to be connected with them now. Those who accused us were not affiliated then and are not now. There was an objective, conscious isolation; never was it a matter of principles. It was simply a matter of specifically solving concrete questions. That stage lasted from the beginning until 22 December 1966. During those years, we managed to keep our secrecy despite the fact that we struck out at the enemy and were struck in turn, despite the fact that we also did mass work. But on 22 December 1966, repression swooped down on us with all its strength, discovering us when we were in the worst possible organizational and political condition. Organizational because it was an extremely heavy blow and political because the country was emerging from an election process through which the ruling classes had once again fooled the people and raised hopes which at that time ran high. Organizational and political because we were weak, without any base among the people, not even among the vanguard.

We were alone, without horses and with the *cuica* on our tail. For us, it was the hour of truth, the critical moment, the time when they could have destroyed us with a single swipe. It was one of the most difficult times for a guerrilla band, one that many do not survive and yet we survived. We did so because no comrade ever weakened and because solidarity brought us together. In any defeat or setback, for the first time, in bitter practice, we had the absolute conviction that here it was possible, that here there was enough heroism, sacrifice, support, to move ahead. That is why, when each and every comrade was given the possibility of "asking to be transferred," only one, one out of dozens of militants, chose to leave.

For the first but not the last time, a tactical defeat turned into a strategic victory because our growth never again stopped. It was unlucky for the regime to discover us, strike out at us and persecute us. It was like pounding on a stake: The harder it pounded, the deeper it drove us into the people. But that is another story.

### Armed Struggle

This idea defined us from the very beginning. In connection with it, we shall point out only a few things here.

Many were surprised to discover violence in Uruguay. It was unjustified surprise or surprise that can only be justified in the light of Uruguayan history of recent years, which can still not conceal a history of Uruguay that a surprised visitor once called "the purple land," and not because of its tranquillity.

From the earliest dawn of our history, it has been marked by the revolutionary people's armed struggle. Jose Artigas said: "This armed nation turned into

military divisions to achieve the best order leading it to its goal." Until the beginning of this century, the "patriotic struggles" came one after the other, generally for less important motives than those now justifying our rebellion. It was the traditional parties that were the authors of these struggles. What is more, they are the fruit of civil war. The founders and main figures are all political and military bosses. It is pitiful and funny at the same time to see today's politicians from those parties affect shock at our fight, as if it were something foreign to them. At times, they are hypocritical because at the same time, they use violence against the people, but only in a more subtle and concealed fashion and they know they are lying. At times, they are ignorant -- that is, they are totally ignorant of the history of their own parties. At times, their courage fails them. They know that we are doing the right thing, that many of their predecessors would, if alive, be with us, but they either remain silent or are horrified.

From the national standpoint, our armed struggle should simply be situated as the last patriotic war, the last civil war, one adopting modern forms, and finally, the people's struggle, the one they cannot swindle because it is clearly waged by those down below against those on top.

But in addition, they ignore the full significance of the armed struggle. In the majority of cases, this is due to a consequence of the rigid schemes applied to evaluate this form of struggle. War is viewed as a final resort, an expression of the regime's final blow. Used therefore in the culmination of the revolutionary process, for a short time and in the form of a rapid blow, it is confused with a typical insurrection. The new significance is not seen, the significance it has acquired in all underdeveloped countries. They are unaware of its meaning of mass agitation, organization, awareness and growing strength in a prolonged process. They ignore that it is a people's war, an original front of the party and power and not the reverse. That is the meaning, the content, we give it. That is why, in our opinion, it is the basic form of struggle, the one to which all others must be subordinated. That is why accusations of terrorism, extremism, and so on made against us are absurd.

To make the accusation that we are not concerned with the masses is to fail to realize that our entire struggle is aimed at winning over the masses, organizing them for and in the armed struggle. It is to be unaware that if the objective were not being reached, then they would have destroyed us long ago. Without a doubt, there is an unavoidable dialectical relationship between the guerrillas and the masses. To speak of guerrillas being cut off from the masses is nonsense when the guerrillas have come out into the open and are striking at the enemy. It is like speaking of the health of a cadaver.

Guerrillas wage the armed struggle to win over the masses and also to continue advancing. Its objective depends vitally upon it because if it does not win, it will perish. The armed struggle is both a response and a political proposal. "If we are partisans of the omnipotence of revolutionary war, that is not bad. It is good; it is Marxist." (Mao Tse-tung)

The armed struggle was learned by the MLN in practice. In the beginning, we were also traveling the mountains and hills, piling up boots and blankets and lights and it was with aching feet, many lights purchased, many mountains traveled and much practice in the city and the country that we discovered that it was possible in the city and applied it. And it is possible. It is costly just as any war today is costly anywhere. If one thinks it is not, let the painful history of rural guerrilla warfare in Latin America speak or let the Vietnamese people have their say. But it delivers and just as it has its disadvantages, it has its advantages and special traits because the urban struggle, in a limited sphere, dealing with a society not totally comprised of the masses, a country in crisis and the immediate historical background we have, guarantees political repercussions that other forms of struggle and guerrilla warfare do not offer.

One day the history will be written and the laws of the urban struggle will be discovered. For the time being, they are part of the private possessions of revolutionary organizations.

### Organization

From the organizational standpoint, the MLN has a 7-year history. Throughout this period, its forms have varied depending on the circumstances and have gradually adapted to new requirements. Here also, theory is the fruit of practice. We can say that the armed struggle is also the great organizer.

Initially, the form was federative. Those were the days of "words separate us; action unites us," and just as action gradually modeled a theory, it also gave rise to organization.

In December 1964, already aware of that unity, several teams resolved to begin to sign their actions as "Tupamaros." Later, in mid 1965, they decided to give that union a definitive form and put it into practice, following it to its logical extreme. That process culminated with the first convention in January 1966, at which a minimum program and by-laws were drafted. Officials were elected and the main tactical and strategic lines were drawn. It was established that the party, as an organization for a power takeover was contained in the MLN as a seed, then it would be built through struggle, especially the armed struggle during its development. Today, over 4 years [sic] later, practice has demonstrated that those resolutions were correct.

The second national convention was held in March 1968. It analyzed all past action, once again elected officers, consolidated growth, set forth new tactical and strategic lines, defined the methodology and adopted democratic centralism as the guiding principle of our internal life. The organization was conceived as a great school in which the new man could be formed. It is not free of contradictions, but it has constructed a style for resolving them. This was possible for several reasons: 1) mutual supervision and training, by regular self-criticism at all levels. Anyone entering the MLN knows what he is getting into the the risks he runs, which produces a natural selection. 2) We are engaged in the fight actively. Our lives are at stake in most discussions. This makes it possible to radically cancel many distortions and sterile discussions. 3) In addition to theory, we are united by action

and this means total commitment. When the uniting factor is only a theory, one disagreement suffices to cause a split. When theory is expressed in practice, a new dynamic emerges, uniting and providing coherence. 4) The problem of power is never lost sight of; practice brings it to the fore constantly. This provides a diaphanous perspective at all levels. 5) Since the organization acts, it has no reason to explain away its lack of operation. Its problems and disagreements are clear. 6) Leadership organs are collegial; there are no "sacred cows." Risks and hardships are equal for everyone. Leaders are involved in action; we do not want pure theoreticians. 7) We aspire to the proletarianization of all members through a high level of manual labor, ideological work, the preaching and practice of austerity, in order to avoid distortions of the urban armed struggle, eliminate the harmful effects of individualism characteristic of the petty bourgeoisie and the middle class, from which we recruit many members, form the new man and increase mutual trust. Even the bourgeois press has had to recognize that austerity.

"Revolutionary war is an antitoxin. Not only will it destroy the enemy's poison, but will also purge us of any impurities." (Mao Tse-tung)

### Tactics

The phenomenon explained in the first section of this work, under the heading "Appearances," has been of cardinal importance in the determination of our military and political tactics. It has given rise to a particular form of war, a specifically Uruguayan form, if one can call it that. We have had to be extremely careful, especially in the armed struggle. The enemy is also naturally determined by that phenomenon and has in turn had to be careful with its forms of repression. The two bands pitted against one another have had and still have to respect the structural phenomenon that determines them. They have had to obey certain laws emanating from it. Why? Because today the battle on all levels is for the people. Some fight to bring awareness, to mobilize, to organize. Others fight to maintain obscurity, to paralyze and divide. Consequently, the war in Uruguay has gone beyond the traditional framework. In itself, its apparition in this country has had unusual characteristics and this is so because the alleged exceptional nature had run deep after 60 years of peace and a certain prosperity. That apparition concealed the profound crisis in which we were living and also concealed the dictatorial nature of class domination. In spite of going further and applying escalating repression and violence, the dictatorship has always tried to clothe itself in garments of which our idiosyncrasy is so fond: parliament, elections, constitution, "freedoms," "guarantees," and so on. That disguise is now ridiculous. It has been torn away until only a few shameful rags remain. But that has happened only recently and in order for it to occur, the crisis first had to force the ruling classes to expose their dictatorship, and the people, acting through their organizations and especially the armed struggle, had to rip away the disguise. Naturally, because of its importance, they will keep their tatters, trying to dye them new colors, and if they leave them behind, they will buy new ones. Let us not ignore the importance of this matter, its relationship with the blind which the revolutionary organizations have to tear away from the eyes of the people. That is why we have not been able to

speak of a Moncada in Uruguay. That is why the guerrillas initially had to adopt "sympathetic" forms. That is why we have sometimes had to turn ourselves into "people's auditors," proceeding against swindlers and the corrupt and giving the war that special content. And we did so. It was not easy to introduce the revolutionary war to people after 60 years of peace. Although they might repudiate it, it was difficult, for an organization armed to the teeth, to control the trigger on more than one occasion. But in addition to doing so by our own virtue, we should point out that it was possible because the contradiction acted on us and on them as well. That is why we had the propaganda response we had with much less fighting and bloodshed than other guerrillas have had to sacrifice. In the light of all of this, one must explain the peculiarities of our guerrilla tactics, but those of the enemy as well.

It was an essentially political battle that is coming to an end because a historical phase is ending and because in winning it, we have created a new thrust. That is why in 1969 we carried out 11 actions affecting the public, some of them mobilizing hundreds of men, and over 80 actions unknown to the public. That is why we increasingly resemble a typical guerrilla army. A great deal has been done, but a great deal remains to be done.

#### In Conclusion

We managed to institute the armed struggle in Uruguay, as the ruling classes have now recognized. "We are at war," say their most conspicuous representatives in the government, the press, parliament, and so on. That is a confession. For a long time, they refused to admit it. Ferreira Aldunate, a professional politician of the ruling classes, who understands nothing or pretends to understand nothing, recently complained, saying more or less that: "Why should we maintain the security measures if the Penal Code is enough to find and capture these criminals?" That is precisely the point: It is not enough and precisely because we are not criminals. We are a political party in arms, performing a political task through war. The same politician said, on 29 April 1970, that "despite the fact that the price of wool and meat is the lowest in years, ranchers support the government because it gives them political guarantees and they think it is wiser to defend their capital before their income." What a definition! What clarity! How can it be that that politician understands nothing?

We have succeeded in building an organization that is now indestructible. We may suffer defeats, they may delay our work, the struggle may have peaks and valleys and even serious setbacks, but they can no longer destroy us. We have set down deep roots in the people. A leader of the repression said in January 1969 that we had a cell in each barrio and that consequently, it would take two or three years to destroy us. He was mistaken, analyzing things as a policeman would, schematically. He made no dynamic political analysis. Today, although that chief has captured many cells, we can tell him that we have many more cells than in 1969. In the current phase, the essential thing for a guerrilla army is to continue to grow and we are doing so. As Aparicio Saravia once said: "For the time being, they are the cowboys and we are the herd. They have to bear the cost."



We have gone much further in the task of building the party. We have practically everything we need to do so.

We have acquired combat experience creating awareness, organizing large sectors of the people. We have gained political importance. In that area, fewer and fewer are the public activities not related to us directly or indirectly. Whether they like it or not, they have to take us into consideration, define themselves, give explanations, take measures, and so on. There is no trade union in the country without at least one Tupamaro at work.

We have given all our comrades in Latin America some ideas on the urban struggle. Let us see what Nelson Rockefeller said in his famous report: "This type of subversion is more difficult to control and governments are forced to use increasingly repressive measures to deal with it. Thus it is that a cycle of terrorist actions and repressive reactions tend to polarize the disturb the political situation, creating more fertile soil for radical solutions in large groups of the population." The armed struggle, war in general, grows in scope, assuming new forms and content, growing more radical. That will be the trend no matter what circumstances might come about as time goes on.

Anyone who waits for a repetition of the best-known phases of the revolutionary war may once again be mistaken. The struggle in our country will respond to specific laws.

The matter of turning the guerrilla force into an army does not depend on metaphysical, merely geographical or territorial questions. Nor does it depend exclusively on a given fairly large social class. It has always depended and now essentially depends on the ratio of forces on the strategic level. That essence may have adopted different forms and not precisely the ones with which we are acquainted. The war will continue to be more internationalized, taking on a continental nature. We do not determine it ourselves; that is determined by conditions in Latin America and its history. It is determined by the common enemy: imperialism. The latter is already intervening in Uruguay against us and the people, for the time being in a veiled fashion. It is doing the same in other brother nations. As we advance, it will carry its intervention further. It might even intervene with its troops or those of its continental gendarmes. Foreign intervention seems to be the fate of Uruguay and its most authentic struggles. It has happened in the past and could happen in the future. The Uruguayan people will respond based on their historic traditions. Civil war will turn into a national war and we shall not be alone. We shall be accompanied by the brother nations of America.

American imperialism is destined to meet the same fate in Latin America that it met in Vietnam. We shall confront it with total war. During that war, the ratio of forces will surely change in favor of the people. A single Vietnam today is sufficient example. Several Vietnams tomorrow would be the death of imperialism. Nor will it be easy. It will be hard and bitter for our peoples, but it will be the final struggle. Imperialism divided these peoples in the past in order to guarantee its interests. It will have to unite them in the future in trying to defend those interests at the cost of bloodshed. The great Latin American nation will be built in that struggle. That is why



we take up the words of Che: "It is absolutely just to avoid any useless sacrifice. That is why it is so important to shed light on the effective possibilities dependent America has of freeing itself in a peaceful manner." "For us, the answer to that question is clear: This may or may not be the time to begin the struggle, but we cannot harbor any illusion or have any right to achieve freedom without fighting." "Nor will the combat be mere street fights with stones and teargas, or peaceful general strikes. Nor will it be the fight of an infuriated people which in two or three days destroys the repressive scaffolding of the ruling oligarchies. It will be a long, cruel struggle in which the front will be in the guerrilla lairs, in the cities, the homes of the soldiers, where repression will seek out easy victims among relatives, in the murdered population, the villages or cities destroyed by enemy bombing. They are propelling us into that struggle. There is no other remedy than preparing for it and deciding to face it."

### Guerrilla Operations

#### Workers Bank

August 1966. Various possible targets were being studied for a finance action and it was finally decided to hit a bank branch, the Workers Bank.

That action would mark a technical and tactical advance compared with previous operations. For the first time, a bank would be entered before it opened and those involved would be there about 15 minutes. Whence the choice of the target, a place with high windows and columns, making it impossible to see in. In addition, there was a side door leading to a secondary street, making it possible to get in without using the main door opening onto a street with heavy traffic. In addition, for the first time, a properly prepared getaway car would be used, along with a uniformed policeman.

Among other things, the study showed that the first person to arrive at the bank was the doorman, at 1215 hours. He would enter by the side door, close it and then open up for employees and police officers standing guard.

Two or three employees had keys and entered by themselves. At 1300 hours, an IBM van would arrive and a man would get out -- sometimes two -- and leave by the door a wooden crate containing the cards to be used during the day. He would receive some papers from the doorman and leave. It was the doorman who would take the box into the bank.

The bank robbery was to begin following the arrival of the doorman. A comrade wearing a police uniform would make him open up and take him into custody. Almost simultaneously, four more comrades would enter, arriving in pairs. Then, as they arrived, the police and employees would be taken into custody, in addition to the occupant(s) of the IBM van, since if they should notice something funny, they would notify the police. Helping take care of these employees and to prevent any attempt at escape would be comrades in a strategically located vehicle. It was assumed that the keys to wherever the money was kept would be with the manager and cashier, meaning that they would arrive at the bank at the latest at 1300 hours, when the bank would open. The

whole action was planned and practiced down to the last detail, step by step, movement by movement, with possible unforeseen incidents, and so on, so that its execution would attract no attention or lead to the slightest suspicion on the part of people in the area. From a bar located across the street onto which the side door opened, the door could be seen perfectly. This problem would be solved by parking a truck in front of the bar.

A total of 14 comrades would be involved, 12 men and 2 women, 5 in the actual robbery team and the rest as lookouts, support and getaway. Four vehicles would be used, 2 of them legal and 2 "commandeered."

Two days before the action, it was realized that the police uniform would need a good brushing and press because it had been put away for some time, kept in a place where its owners would not be able to find it. Unfortunately, when it was taken out, it became obvious that where the police cannot go, mice can.

As for the trousers, well, there were none. The mice had begun with the pants, proceeded on up to a coat pocket and kept going.

Using material, thread, yarn and ingenuity, the women comrades had the uniform ready in a day, with completely new pants with the newly-made blue stripes running down the legs. The coat had a nice pair of patches and a fake pocket.

The uniform was ready, the vehicles "mobilized." The day of action arrived: 13 August.

At 1030 hours in the morning, a truck was parked in front of the bar. After 1200 hours, a car left the five comrades in the robbery team in different spots from which they would proceed to the target, arriving at the appointed hour.

At 1215 hours, the bank doorman arrived, opened the door, entered and closed it behind him. Using predetermined signals, the sign went from lookout to lookout and finally reached the robbery team.

Armed with a Mauser pistol resembling a submachine gun, the policeman with the fake pocket walked toward the bank, following the beat of a regular officer, on the sidewalk, slowly, feigning the indifference that transcends the routine. In the meantime, across from the side door in the middle of the sidewalk, a VW van was parked. Hidden in the back, a comrade with a rifle, another at the wheel listening and commenting on the newspaper open in his hands. A third comrade had gotten out of the van and stood next to the vehicle. Half a block away, the backup car waited with two comrades engaged in an animated conversation, keeping an eye on everything. Two blocks away, whence the side door could also be seen, a third car, the getaway car, waited with another comrade. Thirty meters away, on the same block as the bank and the main door, another woman comrade was stationed as a lookout and finally, a few blocks away, at a bus stop where the real policeman would get off, another waited. From the bar where the truck was parked, a comrade telephoned the bank, thus tying up the phone line.

At 1220 hours, the comrade disguised as a policeman reached the side door and rang the bell. Simultaneously and at a safe distance, two pairs of "bankers" strolled in opposite directions, one from the right and the other from the left side of the main door, going to work, talking, laughing, kicking at stray leaves and gum wrappers....

The doorman answered the bell, just as he had done every day for years, wearing a look of boredom. But the uniform and weapon soon opened his eyes: the coat, trousers, hat and weapon, a policeman, the policeman, the guard. Mechanically, automatically, he opened the door and closed it after the policeman, turned around and walked quickly to the back. Surprised, the policeman followed him, trying to intimidate him. Without even looking at him, the doorman continued on his way, saying, "Come on, man, quit joking."

The policeman then stuck the rifle right in his face, at which point the doorman, now irritated, angrily orders: "Don't play with guns, stupid!"

In the meantime, the two pairs of bankers reach the main door but it is closed. What is going on? They nervously walk back and forth, talking, waiting.

It was difficult to convince the doorman that it was no joke, but he finally believed it. The policeman then went to open up for the four employees. In order to prevent any possible recognition -- up to this point, none was a criminal -- the five covered their faces with handkerchiefs and spread out in the bank: one keeping the doorman in the bathroom; another stationed at the curtained window from which he could see outside, although no one could see in, watching the street and waiting for the signals from there; a third at the door to take anyone arriving into custody, aided by another comrade who would take the captives to the bathroom where they would be held; and the fifth opening drawers looking for weapons. After this was done, someone noticed that women could be seen on the roof of a tall building, across from an uncovered window through which the inside of the bank could be seen perfectly. This definitely was not planned! In case they might have noticed something suspicious or be watching movement inside the bank, it was decided that two comrades should pretend to be typing and they promptly set about their act. Fortunately, the women did not even look. If they had, their suspicions would have only grown at the sight of one of the typists typing very well but without removing his handkerchief from his face!

Within minutes, the employees began to arrive. At 1250 hours, there were already four, at which time the signal was given -- by the comrade in the VW, who closed the newspaper he was reading -- that the real policeman was approaching. He was accompanied by an employee. The comrades inside got ready, but instead of the bell, they heard the noise of keys and rapidly moved down the hall to the door leading inside. The employee opened the door, allowed the policeman to pass, then entered and closed the door. At this point, the comrades appeared and took them prisoner, without any resistance whatsoever. The policeman was very surprised and begged them not to do anything, that he had children.

By this time, there were seven in the restroom. Every employee was asked to turn over the keys upon arrival, but each replied that he had none. The same question was put to all of them in a group and the answer was the same. The time to open the bank was approaching and everyone was beginning to get nervous. Voices were heard at the main door. Through the little window, one could see people, customers, waiting.

At 1255 hours, the doorbell rang, an employee to read the light meter -- the signal of his approach had already been noticed -- accompanied by a comrade presumed to be a bank employee. He walked up to the counter, returned to the door and left. He was allowed to leave because the natural way he followed his routine indicated that he had suspected absolutely nothing. Furthermore, if the women on the roof had suspected something, saw him enter and not leave, they might report it. On the other hand, if they saw him leave, then they would have to conclude that nothing was happening.

Just before 1300 hours, the IBM van arrived carrying only one man. Since the place he always parked was occupied by the VW, the IBM vehicle had to stop about 20 meters away. The man got out and, carrying the box in both hands, moved to the door that was opened for him. When he reached it, the comrade reading the newspaper threw himself backwards, knocking the man and the box into the air. The door was then closed behind him. The comrade returned to the VW and observed that one of the children from a group playing in the street, 15 meters from the door, ran off. Had he seen something and gone to tell someone? No, he was only playing.

Inside, the IBM employee joined the already crowded captives in the restroom, where seven were packed. They were then taken to the main room of the bank and made to lie down, along the counters, so that they would not be seen by the women, those damned women still up on the roof!

1300 hours. More customers were lining up outside. At brief intervals, two more bank officers arrived.

1305 hours. The bank should already have been open, but where were the keys? Did the prisoners have them and be lying? Time was growing short. There was nothing left to do but intimidate, threaten them. They would have to beat up someone and use some sharp, pointed knife, which under such circumstances turns out to be more effective than a revolver. (A shot makes noise, tips people off. A bullet can wound or kill. A knife, on the other hand, entails no such risk and is more impressive. It is more convincing than the barrel of a gun. To graze the neck, threatening to skim the ribs and then penetrate is serious business, persuasive!) If the keys were there, they had to appear, but as in Fuenteovejuna, they all chorused, "The manager has them." And the manager was nowhere! When would he come? Nervousness and tension increased.

It was nearly 1310 hours. The customers continued to wait, including the women lookouts now numbering two, including the one who waited for and followed the policeman. They observed that those waiting were growing impatient and had a bright idea: One looked at her watch and said loudly to the other: "It's ten before one." The customers wearing watches would think that theirs

were wrong, that they were fast. Unbelievably, within seconds, the two comrades were alone and the number of customers in the bar was growing.

The waiting continued inside and the comrades were about to decide to leave when the key was heard in the door. Late, the fat manager was all in a sweat in the hallway, but stopped short when he saw the pistol. His keys were demanded; there was no time for more talk. The only explanation was the gun in the gut and the manager turned over the keys. While two comrades put the money in bags, another took the manager and ordered him to lie down on the floor with the others. He resisted indignantly: How was he going to get his clothes dirty? But the comrades were in no mood for resistance or problems of proper appearance. He finally lay down but not completely. He remained on all fours, keeping his belly barely off the floor. He had been in that position for about a minute when a comrade came and kicked one hand out from under him. The rebellious manager landed on the floor like a bag of potatoes.

A warning signal was received all of a sudden. A few seconds of suspense, weapons and minds ready. The comrade at the window scanned the street and saw a patrol car going by; nothing but a routine run. Everyone heaved a great sigh of relief.

At 1318 hours, the operation was complete and the signal was given outside that the comrades were going to leave. In order not to attract attention, they pretended to be getting out a deposit slip. Soon, ready to thwart any attempt to stop them, the policeman took up his station at the door. Casually, the comrades left with the money and got into the VW. The policeman also got in and the vehicle left. The comrades moved away from the block where the customers, already out of the bar, were beginning to protest the fact that the bank was not open. Their voices would reach the employees and policeman tied up under the counter. In the middle of the afternoon, a comrade moved the truck away from its parking place in front of the bar. At day's end, the Workers Bank would register a loss of 350,000 pesos, a lot of money at the time.

#### Operation El Cazador

1966. An expropriation of weapons during that November in the throngs of the election campaign would achieve two purposes: obtain munitions and make revolutionary propaganda.

Once the action was proposed, possible targets were considered. The El Cazador [Hunter] Gunshop, was the lucky one, located in downtown Montevideo on Calle Uruguay, between Convencion and Andes. Would it be a stickup or a robbery? A robbery because, among other things, of the date on which it would be carried out.

The location was studied for several days, including buildings on the block and across the street, the zone, streets, closing hours, possible obstacles, the weekend "climate," and so on.

Using their eyes more than their ears, comrades went to the gunshop to ask prices of this and that, observing a stairway at the back leading to a landing.

Next to the gunsmith shop was a seven-storey apartment building. Across the street, on the second floor with windows overlooking the street, was a building with offices to rent. Using the excuse of wishing to rent it, the comrades spoke with the manager and observed that there were two different areas: the office itself and, in the back, a room with a small bath.

The survey done, the plan was drawn up. The robbery would be carried out on a weekend. Two groups would be involved: the actual team, made up of five comrades, and the backup group, including eight: six men and two women. Five vehicles would be used, three of them as lookouts.

Although no night watchman was on duty, it would not be possible to enter directly since there would be no way to try to force the lock in the middle of the sidewalk on a well-lit, heavily traveled street. The comrades would therefore have to enter through the empty neighboring building, making a narrow opening into the room through which they would move on to the mezzanine of the gunshop.

Saturday, 26 November, late afternoon. In the midst of the election commotion, people seemed tired. The same atmosphere carried over into the streets, after months of campaign propaganda during which, as has always been the case, using deceit and demagoguery, the rich convince the poor that they should vote for them again on Sunday, when "the sovereign will of the people will be expressed at the polls."

Sly like a fox, the MLN would not approach the ballot boxes, but would vote in its own way, on behalf of the people.

At 1900 hours, Binco and Ronco entered the apartment building and went to the second floor, where they forced the lock of the empty unit. Ten minutes later, Tato, Tono and Pajarito entered. The latter remained in the hall as a lookout. From a window in the room, Tato watched the street, while Tono went about setting up contact with comrades keeping watch and standing by at strategic locations outside, by means of a walkie-talkie. There, a couple with another walkie-talkie would feign a mad embrace each time they wanted to put up the antenna, concealing it from the eyes of passers-by between their bodies.

However, the street noise interfered with reception, meaning that visual communication was also necessary. A paper would be placed in the window as a signal that everything inside was proceeding properly.

Bincho and Ronco began to make the opening in the wall, a job requiring the five comrades to take turns, for it was a task demanding special care and the most delicate hands.

Not a sound, not a single hammer blow could be heard, but a rumbling vibration was inevitable, vibration which, transmitted by the wall, could be heard and attract the attention of people living in the building. Just as the residents' voices reached them, muffled, the noise they would make working would also travel. Along with the heavy movement of people on the stairways and in the elevator, along with the risk, caused the comrades to suspend their labor until a more favorable hour.



They resumed their work at 2030 hours and, after another hour and a half, through the hole made, Bincho's hand explored the other side. He touched something soft, grabbed it and pulled it through. The flashlight, fixed so that it would illuminate only what was strictly necessary, revealed a half-finished coat, basted together, still without sleeves.

Leaving their perplexity and the half-finished coat aside, they continued their work, careful to pull back through every loose piece that might make noise if it should fall to the floor.

At 2400 hours, the hole was completed.

No longer was it necessary to stand watch in the corridor. The comrade on duty left and all five went through where, from another window, the street could be seen.

In the shadows, eight eyes anxiously followed the beam of the flashlight. Once again they were puzzled, confused. They were in a room with shelves stacked with clothing -- dresses, apparently -- with a big, long table, scissors, tape measures, irons, and so on.

Obviously, it was a tailor's shop. Could it be possible that tailors and gunsmiths occupied the building?

They looked for the stairway seen by the comrades who first visited the shop and found nothing but a closed door in the back. After taking off the bottom panel, a stairway did appear, but it did not lead to the gunshop. Rather, it went to an enormous showroom with a counter and many dressing rooms. However, it was not a store and had nothing to do with the gunshop. It opened on to Calle Andes. They returned to the mezzanine. No doubt about it: The stairway seen in El Cazador led somewhere else, not to where they were.

Had they failed? Would they have to leave?

No, for while the mezzanine did not belong to the gunshop, as they had believed, the shop was still there, under them. They would just have to go through the floor, but how? With what? Their mood at the moment, their rage, tempted them to break through with their bare hands, their teeth. And yet, after deliberating a time, they decided to bring the proper tools, even to drill through the concrete. When they were about to transmit their request to the comrades in the street, someone had the idea of using an iron bar to pull up one of the glass tiles forming a transparent portion of the floor measuring nearly a meter square.

He pulled up one, then another, and then more, until the right size hole was open in the floor.

With a piece of cloth with knots tied every 50 centimeters, they put together a 10-meter-long ladder, the distance to the floor of the gunshop. During this period of time, they tried to communicate with their comrades outside, but the latter had turned off their walkie-talkie. In order to attract their



attention and make them turn it on again, the comrade watching at the window lit his lighter two or three times, which only alarmed one of the comrades in the street, who ran to tell him not to smoke, not to light the lighter because "you can see it clearly" from outside. So excited and in such a hurry was he that when he went up the stairs, he nearly ran over a couple who, perhaps taking advantage of the darkness, were wrapped together in a tight embrace.

Once the ladder was finished, it was tied to the big table, which weighed as much as an elephant.

Tato, Bincho and Ronco went back down. On the mezzanine of the tailor shop Tono remained to receive the things and pass them on to Pajarito who, in the empty room on the other side, put them in the bag.

Down below, two more ladders were discovered which, when put together, took the place of the one they had made. They continued their explorations and, thinking there might be some hidden storeroom, hunted and searched the walls and floor, board by board, except in the part illuminated by the streetlight coming in the window. But they found nothing.

They then began to take out the weapons, ammunition and lanterns from the show windows and showcases in order to take them back up. It was a difficult task because of the risk of being seen from the outside, a risk they escaped by a hair when, as a comrade reached for a fine rifle, a policeman went by close to the window. No spring could have brought the arm back more quickly or thrown the body to the floor more swiftly.

Once the shop had been cleaned out, everything taken up and put into the bags, the three comrades went back up. Bincho leaned on the table and stuck himself with something. Picking it up and looking at it in the light of the lantern, he saw the gold police uniform button and realized what kind of a tailor shop they were in!

In two or three minutes, they had over 15 uniforms in the bags.

When everything was ready to leave, they gave the signal, taking the paper out of the window.

A comrade went down on the elevator, leaving it open in order to prevent anyone unwelcome from going up.

The getaway car waited opposite the door, but the door was closed. Ronco tried to force it open. A comrade came to help him and when they were in the midst of their endeavors, three policemen appeared half a block away. The door was abandoned; the car left. Inside, the five comrades and their bags hid in the darkest corner.

Walking slowly pushing their bicycles, the policemen passed by, looking inside as a matter of habit, and continued on their way.

The car that had returned did not stop because the door still resisted the efforts of the comrades inside and the levers to which they had to resort. Another long pause because of a patrol car that approaches and cruises by.

Some 45 minutes later, giving up on opening the door, the comrades decided to break one pane of glass. The driver of the vehicle parked across the street burned rubber, trying to blot out the noise of the breaking glass.

Like race horses waiting to spring out of the gate, the four loaded comrades await the blow that will open the way to the car. Following the tremendous creash heard several blocks away, they shoot out of the door.

"What a way to leave!" comments one woman near a comrade about a half block away.

In less than a minute, everything is loaded: Ten bags carry 20 long arms, including guns and rifles, 50 revolvers, 8,000 rounds of 22-caliber ammunition, 1,000 rounds of other calibers, one battery-powered beacon, lanterns, flashlights, and 15 to 20 police uniforms.

It was 0400 hours when the car finally left, Sunday, an election day....

The daily newspapers not published on Sunday carried the news with the result of the elections.

LA MANANA ran the headline "Typical Commando Style." EPOCA said "It is the ballot cast by weapons."

#### Carrasco Casino Operation

September 1968. They had reached the bottom of the barrel and thus began to look at three possible targets: two banks and the Carrasco Casino. Having completed the studies, on 6 October, for reasons of weight -- and pesos -- they decided to go after the casino. The amount of money they could get there would be difficult to find in a bank and at the same time, they would be striking directly at one of the pernicious cores of the regime and the oligarchy. Such action would take on far-reaching political and social significance.

On 8 October, the police conducted a raid and found a photograph of the outside of the casino. As a result, the guard was stepped up.

Although it was decided to suspend the action, the comrades continued to watch the target to see what was happening. At the end of the month, the special guard was withdrawn and everything reverted to normal. The stakeouts were then intensified. The casino could easily be entered and toured during the hours of play. In addition, one could go in in the daytime, taking advantage of bricklaying going on in one part of the building.

Areas, streets, schedules of gaming and of personnel, police protection, and son on, were all noted. Diagrams, models and maps were put together and drawn.

Before all the details were even complete, discussions began of the plan that was drawn up around 1 November.

Among other things, the study showed that the money was taken to the bank only once a week, on Friday afternoons. The operation was therefore scheduled for early Friday morning, after the games would be shut down and most of the personnel would be gone. Some 15 comrades would be involved: 13 men and 2 women, plus 4 vehicles.

A couple would first cut through the screen of a basement window, following which a comrade would enter and open a door to the outside in a less well-lighted, visible place than the window. Five more comrades would enter through that door, joining the one inside, making six of the seven to make up the commando team. If that door could not be opened, they would have to go in through the window, although this would involve a greater risk since it is in the front of the casino. This would happen about a half hour before the personnel leaves. The comrades would wait in the basement and upon the departure of the personnel, a signal would be given from the outside and they would leave the basement, crossing the long corridor to a stairway leading to the lower floor. Located on the first floor are the guards -- two policemen -- and, in addition, bathrooms for employees and the gamblers, lounges used by personnel between shifts, and so on, meaning that there are always people coming and going, entering and leaving. Although most personnel would be gone, there would still be plenty of people on the lower floor because there would be some 30 persons responsible for counting, wrapping and guarding the money, as well as janitors, administrative personnel and barmen. The comrades would then have to move up to the lower floor with the greatest care, ready to take the policemen and any people into custody. Having done so, two comrades would remain there: one guarding the "prisoners" and the other walking around, keeping an eye open to handle anyone who might show up and, at the same time, responsible for disconnecting a telephone switchboard and for maintaining contact with the seventh member of the group. The latter, upon entering the lower floor, would use the main door and remain there to prevent anyone from escaping. He would have to take anyone making such an attempt prisoner, along with those coming in from the street, turning them over to the comrade in contact with him, who would in turn pass them on to the person guarding the prisoners.

The four remaining comrades would go to the first floor. Having taken those in charge of the money into custody, along with anyone else there, they would get the keys from the person handling them. Having picked up the money, they would go back down, taking any prisoners along with them and finally locking them in the basement, along with those from the first floor. Then they would get out.

On Friday, 16 November, when everything was already planned, the operation had to be suspended because of the impossibility of cutting the screen. It was more difficult than expected -- being of steel -- and the comrades only had one set of pincers. What was worse, in the middle of their attempt to cut the screen, a patrol car appeared, causing them to lose time and making it practically impossible to bring a metal cutter.

During the days that followed, additional studies led to the discovery of a door through which one could go directly from the street to the basement hall,

thus eliminating the complicated work of the basement. The door was locked from the inside with a large, heavy padlock. A couple would enter the casino sufficiently ahead of time, as if to gamble. After a few minutes in the game room, they would need to go to the bathroom and would therefore naturally hasten to the lower floor. From there, they would go to the basement, cut the padlock and close it in such a way that it could be opened at the slightest pressure. If caught, they would have to pretend.... A couple in a dark, lonely place, next to a door....

Thursday, 23 November. At 11 o'clock at night, five comrades in the robbery team would gather together on the beach. At such a time of year and at that hour, there would be plenty of people on the beach wearing little clothing, stretched out on the sand, strolling about, getting wet, making love in some solitary place. But people like that quintet: in suits, wearing shirts, ties, dress shoes and hats, stretched out under the trees, would definitely attract attention. They would therefore have to be careful not to be seen. If someone should see them, they would have no choice but to take him.

At 2330 hours, far from the beach, three more comrades went to a garage. Going to speak with the watchman, they asked whether there was any gas. Told there was not, they asked if they could use the telephone. Again, no telephone. But they were already on top of him. Then if there is no gas and no telephone, "Keep quiet!" And they stuck their guns in his face.

Choosing the vehicle needed to make up the four they had planned, they leave, taking the watchman with them. At a precise spot, they let him out and two comrades stayed behind, guarding him. The other went to the beach to tell the others that the fourth car was ready.

It was early Friday morning. At about one o'clock, the couple that had been strolling on the avenue for a long time crossed and entered the casino: she, supple and graceful; he, straight as a stick, stiff, quite uncomfortable. And no wonder! With a 60-centimeter shears on his shoulder, hanging from his armpit nearly to his hip under his coat and pants. And if that were not enough, on the other side of his belt was a robust 45.

Strolling about, pausing a bit at one table, then another stroll and finally, the need -- simulated or real? -- to go to the bathroom. In the meantime, another couple remained in the room, at a table, watching, ready to intervene if anything should be discovered and an alarm set up. The first couple proceeds to the lower floor and from there to the basement. Once at the door, the shears make quick work of the padlock. Once the door is open, they go out and hold it with a few boxes. The woman returns to the casino to tell the other couple that everything is fine. The comrade crosses over to the beach and tells the others there.

But the waiting continued. At 0230 hours, the people leaving indicate that the roulette has stopped. A half hour later, the cashiers and dealers leave. A few minutes more and the bus leaves with most of the personnel.

At 0330 hours, a car brings Ringo, Loto and Manito from the beach. The first two get out across from the main door. The car drives halfway around the casino and parks opposite the main door, from which Manito is to leave at the appointed time. As long as the operation is underway, the vehicle will be driven by a couple around the casino.

Ringo and Loto find the door that was to be closed open. Had the broken padlock been discovered? After a few seconds of surprise and hesitation, they are prepared for whatever might come, but nothing happens. Probably the cardboard boxes had been blown away from the door by the wind. The remaining four arrive and the car with the driver remains parked in front of the door. Only 35 meters away is the backup car with three comrades, including the driver. The fourth getaway car is a few blocks away, without a driver.

Inside, in the basement, six "mutes" walk 40 meters down a hall and reach the stairway. They take their shoes off and someone says to be extremely careful about an iron cover found in a certain section of the stairway because it makes a lot of noise. They then continue on in silence, in a predetermined order, going up the steps and someone steps on the iron cover. The seconds seem like an eternity as all ears wait for someone to come, but they are safe. Once again, they start to climb, arriving at a swinging door that connects with the lower floor. Perhaps because of the nervous tension, a shout sounds like hundreds of persons. Through the crack between the two door panels, the first thing they see is a policeman sitting down precisely as if to make a movement and seize his machine gun that is on the floor within reach. Did he hear something suspicious and try to grab his weapon or was it just a movement coinciding with the precise moment when so many eyes were fixed on the door? It will never be known because simultaneously with his movement, the six heavily armed comrades broke through the door, firing a burst from their machine gun at the floor. What fast reflexes the policeman had! How quickly, how agilely he moved to jump from the chair and stand with his hands over his head!

"Where is the other one?"

"I don't know," he whispered.

One middle-aged man made a suspicious movement and Loto, who was aiming at him to intimidate him, fired a shot, which fortunately hit no one.

"That's enough," said the comrade with the machine gun, unaware that he had not meant to fire.

In less than a minute, the rest of the people had been taken prisoner and among that group of "penitents" was the policeman, whiter than a sheet, standing on tiptoe, like a ballet dancer, immobile, trying to touch the sky -- or the ceiling -- with the tips of her fingers.

Immediately thereafter, at the sound of the shots, two or three persons came down from the first floor. Coming down a few steps and without seeing what was happening, because of their position, they asked, "What happened?"

"Nothing," answered a comrade. "The officer just let off a few shots, nothing else."

Thus reassured -- everything was so calm -- they returned to the first floor, with the four comrades almost on their heels.

Ringo stayed downstairs, watching the prisoners, a weapon in each hand -- his own and the policeman's revolver -- while Loto went over the basement in order to take anyone else prisoner, cut off the switchboard and remain in contact with Manito, who was acting as a doorman at the main door, where he had been since the group entered the lower floor.

As he was going to let Manito know that everything was fine, Loto saw someone coming as he looked through the window of a door opening onto a long hallway. It was the other policeman, coming on the run with his belt all tangled up, his arm over his head, the revolver still in the holster but without aiming or aiming backwards, while with his other hand he tried to pull up his pants. The shots had caught him off guard, to say the least.

Loto aimed at him through the glass and as he went by the door, he was shouting, "I give up! I give up!" Almost simultaneously, three more men appeared and were also taken prisoner. With a revolver in each hand now, and the police officer with none, but with his pants in place, Loto took the group to join that of guard Ringo. He went back to Manito, this time with nothing to report. The two "prisoners" he took from Manito he led to Ringo. When he tried to put the switchboard out of commission, he could not reach it. Two persons appeared coming out of a bathroom, one of them coming her hair and, without missing the stroke, calmly marched off with the other to share the fate of Ringo's prisoners. For the second time, Loto tried to get to the switchboard, but still could not reach it because of the apparition of a bartender trying to escape, who went off with the others instead. Finally, Loto reached the switchboard on the third try and decommissioned it.

From there, he went to the main door. An old man appeared in a doorway, saw him, turned rapidly around and locked himself inside. Loto left him there because there was no danger with him locked up.

At the main door, Manito looked the part of a doorman, in his impeccable black suit, standing at attention, his hand clasped in front of him, a small black notebook in the left hand and a nice little Luger in the right.

How politely he received the guests! How dignified he was as he bowed his head in greeting! How suavely he took his hand from behind the notebook to shake hands! Since Loto was a little late, he already had his little group of penitents.

Simultaneously with the action on the lower floor, the four comrades that proceeded on to the first floor took 8 or 10 persons there and got the key to a safe. The key to the other, where there must have been more money, did not appear. Whoever had it was not in the casino. Once the first safe had been



opened, they left the prisoners with those having none, in order to gain time. The shots fired at the beginning of the operation told them they dared not waste a second more. Manito's prisoners were then taken to the lower floor to join Ringo's, making 16 altogether. Although they were originally to be taken to the basement, they were left there.

Ready to leave -- ten minutes had gone by since they entered -- the problem now was to find the shoes, a desperate endeavor in half darkness. The police would find some of them later, just as they recovered two revolvers, a machine gun and two tear gas bombs taken from the casino and left in a house that was raided that same afternoon. What the police did not recover was the 6 million pesos.

#### General Motors

June 1969. At the end of a long, incident-filled trip, it was announced that Rockefeller would arrive in Uruguay. Sent by Nixon, he would gather a general report on the political and economic situation of Latin American countries. The government planned a great reception whose most notorious feature would be the enormous deployment of security mechanisms. Montevideo would only be a stopping off place or, best yet, a rest stop. After getting off the plane, the visitor would board a helicopter that would take him to Punta del Este, turned into a military peninsula. In the absence of the people, the guest would be surrounded by the warmth of the police forces and the army. Nevertheless, the army resolved that the people's "warmth" would not be lacking. To that effect, it chose the naturally unwitting cooperation of the General Motors plant in our country, which, in addition to bleeding the national economy, provides cars for the police.

For 20 days, our comrades studied that industrial plant, located on a 400 by 200 meter site, with a chain link fence 2 meters high, topped by three strands of barbed wire. The plant is comprised of a building 80 by 20 meters, used for the administration of the plant itself, two gas pumps and, 40 meters away, about a dozen vehicles for the police.

The operation was planned on the basis of this situation: burning of the administrative building and the vehicles, being careful not to affect the source of jobs, the plant and workshops.

Access was easy: going over the fence. But how many watchmen would there be? Where would they be located? How would we find them and rapidly take them into custody and by surprise?

At night, two watchmen were observed in the administrative area, but there might be more in the workshops, since the lights burn all night, both here and in the administrative building.

An attempt was made to find out this information, using the ruse of a messenger bearing a telegram. At eleven o'clock at night, the excuse used did not yield the anticipated result, but something was learned: When the bell was rung, the watchman answered it at the gate.

The problem of how many watchmen there were remained to be solve at the very time of the action, which would begin just before midnight on 19 July, the birthday of Artigas. Nine comrades would be involved: five in the actual team, three as lookouts and support and the rest guarding the guard in the garage where the necessary vehicle would be "commissioned." Three comrades in the actual commando group, wearing Air Force uniforms, would use a good excuse so that the General Motors watchman would open the gate. The other would already have entered, going over the fence and remaining hidden behind an embankment near the gate in order to take the watchman prisoner if the excuse did not produce the desired effect or if, partially convinced, he should want to telephone some superior about what to do.

19 June

At 2330 hours, the vehicle was commandeered at a garage and one comrade remained behind guarding the watchman with orders to release him at 0100 hours. The other comrades waiting in different places were picked up and at 2350 hours, they arrived three blocks from the target. Three comrades took off the coats covering the uniforms, put on their hats and with the other two, in civilian dress, got out and walked toward the target. After 50 meters, they realized that they had forgotten their light weapons in the car and ran back. Now with the weapons, they resumed their waok. In the fine uniforms, the three "aviators" felt naked in the intense night cold. Two blocks before, the two who would climb the fence went ahead with a rope ladder, a board and a pliers to cut the barbed wire. The lookout and backup car, carrying a man and a woman, parked in the middle of the street, 100 meters to the right of the gate. Oncho stationed himself on the left at the same distance. Already hidden inside at the embankment were Nelo and Lupo. Oncho lit a cigarette, the signal to the three uniformed comrades waiting nearby to advance. They did so, arrived at the gate and rang the bell. Between the time they rang the bell and the watchman arrived, one of them noticed a quite visible five-point star on the hat of the other. He told the comrade wearing it and to his astonishment, turned the hat around so that the MLN symbol that someone somewhere had doodled on it to fill time was in the back. The watchman arrived and listened attentively to the explanation of the Air Force officer: Because of Rockefeller's arrival, the government had ordered maximum security measures to ensure order and prevent possible attacks that might be made by extremists. Consequently, the Air Force was responsible for guarding certain industrial plants of foreign firms and they had come to perform their duty.

The watchman believed the aviator and, thanking them, opened the gate. Once inside, the officer ordered a subordinate:

"Private Ferreira, you stand guard here (at the gate). If anyone suspicious approaches, shoot him on the spot."

The soldier obeyed. The officer, the other soldier and the watchman then walked to the administrative building. In answer to the question of how many watchmen there were, he answered two, he and another, and told where he was. They were brought together and told the truth. They had no other choice but to submit, remaining in the administrative building under the guard of the other

comrade soldier. The officer then returned to the gate and passed on that information. The vehicle parked opposite the gate, after picking up Oncho. The latter got out and remained on guard between the car and the gate. Nelo and Lupo came out of their hiding place and with the officer and Ferreira, went to get things ready for the fire. Two remained in the administrative building, opening furniture drawers and cabinets, getting out papers and books, and after seeing whether there was anything of interest to take with them, threw everything into a pile. They then carried the gas around in pails and poured it wherever needed in the necessary amounts. In a corner, handcuffed and under guard, the watchmen observed. Simultaneously, the officer and Ferreira dumped gas inside and outside the police vehicles. They would have to dam up a channel to prevent the fuel from going into the drains. The task was a slow one and Ferreira saw a fire hose and extinguisher. He immediately hooked it up to the pump, which made the operation much more efficient than using the buckets. During the maneuver, something truly "Chaplinesque" occurred: While getting out the extinguisher, Ferreira accidentally set it off, covering the officer with a thick layer of white foam.

With their eye on the clock, the comrades at the gate saw that time was getting away from them. Everything had to be done before one o'clock because the garage attendant would be released at that time. They told the comrades to speed things up and returned a second time. Nerves were on edge. Nerves, haste and care combined into one and time was passing. There was no way to speed up the flow of the pump, the one pump in operation, the other being broken. Minutes went by, flew by.

Everything was finally done on time. Two incendiary bombs were taken from the vehicle and left, one in the administrative building and the other among the cars.

The watchmen were untied and once everyone was out of the area, they were told to leave. With eight comrades inside, the vehicle took off. When it was some 100 meters away, the administrative building burst into flames. It was one o'clock in the morning. After another 150 meters, another immense explosion engulfed the cars, eight vehicles the police would no longer have to repress the people. According to the daily newspapers, radio and television, the fire caused \$250 million in damages to the administrative buildings and automobiles, of which only ashes and twisted metal were left. The plant suffered no damage.

Unfortunately, another simultaneous, similar action carried out against another Yankee company was thwarted as soon as it began.

#### Pando Operation\*

This operation pursued several concrete goals, some immediate or short-range; others longer-range in nature.

The former were propaganda, finances, supplies and an homage to Che and what he symbolized for all people fighting in Latin America.

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\* Pando is a city of some importance, located about 32 kilometers from Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay.

The latter included making a demonstration of strength and possibilities so as to encourage the struggles of our people and, at the same time, point out a way and an alternative with tangible deeds.

Naturally, the latter would not only be pursued through the operation as such. It was one more action forming a plan that also included other highly varied operations.

It should not be forgotten that from the middle of September 1969, the MLN was holding Gaetano Pellegrino Giampietro, which alone was enough to inject emotion into the political atmosphere. It was also holding the repressive forces in check. One should add to this other military actions carried out the same month, along with others planned for after Operation Pando and which, when executed, climaxed that demonstration which we pointed out as the second objective of the operation.

On the whole, with respect to planning, execution and consequences, the action was a real challenge for the future and the action which the MLN proposes. It was the beginning of a more complex modus operandi, which therefore presented new problems to solve, both in planning and in coordination and execution. We can also include this part -- the execution of a new and fundamental experiment -- in the chapter of objectives. In this respect, the organization, its groups and militants -- whether participants or not -- obtained a whole series of lessons that later determined the success of many actions. Pando was therefore a milestone in the internal development of the MLN, marking a clear direction for the future.

The operation included six targets: the police station, fire station, telephone central and the Republic, Pan de Azucar and Pando banks.

A total of 49 comrades were involved, divided into six teams and a coordinator. Care was taken to include those comrades on each team whose aptitudes and particular talents were best suited to the action of each objective.

Every team surveyed the terrain, studied its target and, based on the results, planned the action to be executed, in coordination with the others and forming a general plan.

The day of the operation, having arrived by different means: cars, bus, railroad, all participants would be at their respective meeting points at a specific time. They would use an armband to identify one another.

At the appointed time, the coordinator was to give the first team to go into action the order to begin the operation and, during the procedure, visit the targets in order to receive and transmit news, handle problems that might arise, being empowered to suspend the operation at any time, if circumstances should require it.

## A. Development

Days before the operation, a funeral home was contracted using a simple excuse: the repatriation of the remains of a relative who had died years ago in Buenos Aires. Arriving from there on 8 October, they would be taken to the family mausoleum in the Soca Cemetery. At 1000 hours on the 8th, nine relatives and a "priest" arrived at the funeral home with the urn and flowers. The service was already ready: a hearse, five cars, six drivers and a services director.

While the urn and the flowers rode in the hearse, the relatives and priest rode in the cars in pairs. The funeral director was told that at Kilometer Marker 36,500, other relatives -- aunts and uncles, to be precise -- would have to be picked up.

The cortege went through the city, took Road 8 and arrived without incident at the marking post indicated. There the cortege stopped. In addition to the ten aunts, uncles and cousins, there were many people in the group, and during the greetings, embraces and son on of the relatives, it was decided not to take the funeral home employees prisoner there as planned. Resuming the trip to Soca, the cortege was now followed by a Kombi pickup waiting nearby.

### White Handkerchief

Near Kilometer Post 40, the signal agreed upon -- a female comrade took out a white handkerchief -- the seven employees were taken prisoner. Although they put up no resistance, they asked that the cars, their daily bread, be taken care of, while explaining that some were automatic. Reassured about the use of their cars, the first problem arose concerning their own safety. According to the plan, the employees were to take the hearse, but the company had provided a smaller one than anticipated. How could the problem be solved with the seven men waiting and the comrades, without any place to put them? The Kombi provided the solution: They would be shut up in it. Although this meant modifying the plan, it was inevitable. Better a changed plan than a thwarted operation.

### Objective

With the seven in the Kombi, with two comrades acting as guards and one at the wheel, with the others assigned to vehicles by teams, when the return trip to Pando was resumed, which was 5 kilometers back, one of the cars would not start. Seeing it was impossible to fix it, it was abandoned and its occupants went into another car which, 3 kilometers before Pando, left Route 8 in order to "obtain" a car to make up for the one lost in the outskirts of the city. At the same point, minutes previously the Kombi had also broken away from the caravan, going to the Pando park to gain time, located 3 kilometers north of the urban plant and less than 2 from Road 8.

The rest of the cortege dispersed upon entering Pando, awaiting the time -- 30 minutes were left -- to go to the meeting spot of each team, still not complete and which would be made up by the comrades using their own means.

## B. Coordination

The vehicle appropriated for the task of the coordinator had to be a motorcycle or scooter, with the speed, maneuverability and quickness of response to make it possible to go anywhere without any problem, using the sidewalk or going against the traffic if circumstances should so require. In addition, there was the fact that the comrade assigned had years of experience with such vehicles.

Lacking a cycle with such features, a team not involved in the operation was given the task of finding one. But when the day and the time arrived, they had still not obtained one. Although the deadline was extended an hour -- until 1100 hours -- it was futile. As a result, Balbi, the coordinator, and Melio, a member of the police station team, set about obtaining a motorcycle. A tactical error resulted in the failure of an initial attempt at the Dental School. They then went to the vicinity of the Clinical Hospital, but still had nothing by 1200 hours. They took a bus to Avenida Italia and Buleverd Artigas. No more time could be lost by being choosy; they would have to take whatever they could find, grabbing the first thing to come along, whether a motorcycle, scooter, taxi or private car. The opportunity finally presented itself: A peugeot driven by a woman parked across from the Italian Hospital. The comrades got into the car from both sides at precisely the moment when the driver was setting the brake and putting the keys into her purse.

Balbi nicely explained that they needed her car for a while. When she refused to turn over the keys, Balbi insisted, begging her not to force them to use their weapons, at which time she opened her purse and turned over the keys, explaining how to release the brake. The whole thing was so casual that the attendant only a few steps away noticed nothing. The keys passed from hand to hand as if they were relatives.

It was 1225 hours when she entered the hospital.

After driving a few blocks at normal speed, the car sped off with the lights on and the horn honking. On the outskirts of Montevideo, they barely avoided running over a child playing in the street. Later, they passed a vehicle of the Highway Police.

They arrived in Pando at 1303 hours, left Road 8 and took General Artigas as far as the water tank, where the police station team was to meet. The comrades in the car thought that the team would be waiting for them. When passing the station, they noticed the vehicle of the Republic Bank team, which was to act as backup at the very beginning of the operation. As they proceeded on, they saw the other teams at their respective meeting places, but there was no one at the OSE tank. Returning by another street, which the team was assumed to be taking to the target. Half a block from the police station, now behind them, they heard a shot. There could be no doubt about it: It was at the police station where the team was already in operation. Melio jumped out of the car before it even stopped and as he ran toward the police station, Balbi shouted to him: "Be careful when you go in. The cops or comrades mistaking you for somebody else might shoot at you!"



Balbi drove back and parked opposite the building. He got out and stood by the car. He could hear more shots inside; glass fell on the sidewalk. He saw that the fire station had already been taken. A comrade from the police station told him that everything was going fine, but that it was not over with. He then left and drove around the block, stopping at the corner of the bus monitor station, to cut off any possible escape of four policemen near the people crowding together to watch. But the officers remained nailed to the ground, although they kept looking toward the fire and police stations. They kept moving toward their weapons, but never took them out of the holster. They fidgeted around with the nervous look of someone scratching himself and finally made a decision: All four took to the bus station. After all, they did not want to get hit by some stray bullet!

Reassured by the decision of the police, the coordinator moved toward the police station. He had not gone half a block when he observed that the car assigned to the Republic Bank was moving toward its target, using the white handkerchief to indicate that the police station had been taken and that the other teams could go into action. Balbi thus began his rounds, hitting the other targets and seeing that all the teams were beginning their tasks. Some comrades were putting on armbands, while others gave orders, readied their weapons, and so on.

By this time, the people had already noticed that the Peugeot was part of the operation. Its constant rounds and the unmistakable armband worn by Balbi left no doubt. His visits to the targets were joined by his watch over Road 8 in case the shots fired would bring the Highway Police located only a few kilometers from the city.

On one of his trips to Republic Bank, he was told of complications that had occurred but that had been overcome.

At 1310 hours, the alarm went off throughout the city, resulting in traffic chaos and crowds of people in the streets. Every target had its own spectators, which in some cases nearly ended up participating in the events, such was the proximity.

As the time came to finish the operation, the coordinator noticed that the events were taking a not altogether favorable turn. He therefore decided to change the order of departure: The police station team, scheduled to be the last in leaving, would be first.

The decision was made because of the foregoing reason and based on the following circumstances: 1 -- The action of Republic Bank, the longest and most complicated, was drawing to a close. Consequently, at the two remaining banks, which were easier, the same would be true. 2 -- The police station team was the farthest from the final meeting place and therefore, if it left last and given the state of traffic, would encounter the greatest risks and possible delays. One minute gained or lost could be decisive for their return to Montevideo.

At 1314 hours, he ordered the evacuation of the police station and fire station teams.

Parking the Peugeot a block from the police station, a jeep carrying its driver and a police officer passed by, heading in that direction. When it was half a block away, the comrades who had carried out the fire and police station operations were already getting into their vehicles. The men in the jeep had to see them. Was it possible that they suspected nothing, or did they just pretend to hear nothing? It was impossible to know. Whatever the case, they kept going and parked a few meters on so the occupants could get out. At a sign from Balbi, the woman comrade who was the last to leave the police station got into the Peugeot, relieving the load of one of the vehicles.

The coordinator then made the final tour of the banks and the UTE [Uruguayan Workers Union], noting that the police and fire stations had been evacuated.

Half a block from the Pando Bank, the street was blocked. Shots could be heard. It was the comrades who, leaving the bank, were shooting it out with a soldier.

Unable to proceed any further, Balbi backed up and took a one-way street, going in the wrong direction. After a block, he saw in the rearview mirror a car following with a flat tire from the shootout. At the same time, he noticed a policeman about 25 meters ahead. He tore off the armband and drove by without the uniformed officer noticing anything. However, the same was not true of the car behind him. Seeing him come, the soldier planted himself in the middle of the street and a shootout occurred that is recounted in the action of the Pando Bank team.

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The coordinator then made his final tour in vain because after the time that had lapsed, he would find no one at the targets. He therefore went to the cemetery, but 100 meters before he reached it, an axle broke and he had to continue on foot.

### C. Police Station

The plan was made in about 10 days and in two phases. The first included the outside: entry, departure and police personnel on the job; movement in the streets and businesses in the vicinity; other details.

Three things were established during this phase: 1) the need to occupy the fire station next to the police station because from it, it would be possible to hinder and possibly ruin occupation of the police station; 2) the number and rank of personnel regularly at work at about 1300 hours; and 3) the fact that direct radio communication existed with at least two repressive sectors, which showed that there were two different antennas.

The second phase included the inside of the police station. There was no lack of excuses for entering: to pay for licenses, dog vaccinations and other routine administrative procedures at town police stations. The comrades organized so as to increase the number of entries and gradually penetrate deeper, from the vestibule to the back. They generally entered in groups of three, never fewer than two. While one explained the problem or procedure

in question, thus occupying the attention of the official, the others would memorize and measure everything they could see. From one office to another, from one place to another, they inspected everything. Over and over they used the case of a couple needing to use the restroom. With the permission and friendly or unfriendly indication of how to get there, they would use it. While the woman entered, the man would remain outside, sizing up everything in site. Even a dog helped: Needing two and after making sure that it would not hurt him, they had the same dog vaccinated twice. More than once, it happened that a male or female comrade would see, while the other half of the couple spoke with the official on duty in the guard office, his or her picture among the "Wanted" photos.

The map of the police station was thus gradually completed.

It was a single-storey building located on General Artigas to the north, with the entry on a corner. Beyond a hallway and on the left was the waiting room and office of the police commissioner. The radio office was on the right and ahead, completing the triangle, was the guard office. On the left and righthand sides of this office were single doors leading to interior rooms. The one on the left opened onto a corridor with another door, always closed, leading to the commissioner's office, and still another leading to a room off the office. Opposite the door of this room was one more door to one of the bedrooms for personnel. Both the waiting room and the office and contiguous areas had windows over Calle General Artigas.

The door on the right led to another corridor which, linked to the previous one, would form an L, if the guard office did not separate them. This hallway, onto which the administrative office and another room opened -- both with windows overlooking the street, ended in a door leading to the back, a vacant, weedy lot, with a locked storage building and double gate leading to the street.

The open patio, about 4 by 4 meters, was bordered on the east by the first corridor and the back of the guard office; in the north, by the second corridor; in the west by the cells and latrines; and in the south by two bedrooms, one with a door on the patio and the other with the door opening onto the corridor already mentioned.

This was the target whose taking would mark the beginning of the operation.

The safety and cleanness of its execution would be fundamental, to such a point that on this action depended all the others. Whence the importance of surprise, knowledge of the terrain and the choice of weapons that would be intimidating, light and have great fire power.

The assigned team was made up of eight comrades: six men and two women. They would have one vehicle, the hearse from the funeral home.

When the time came to begin to move on the target, the coordinator was not to be found. He had remained in Montevideo with a teammate, waiting for a motorcycle. Some problem had delayed them. It was decided that the delay did not stand in the way of beginning the operation. All the teams would provide the

security needed and if the coordinator did not appear and problems arose during the operation, the comrades would have to solve them some way.

1258 Hours

A couple reached the police station. No guard was on the sidewalk, contrary to custom. Inside the hall, two uniformed policemen were falling asleep in the calm, siesta atmosphere: one in the radio office and the other in the guard office. Here, identifying themselves as members of the Volpe Association, she a social worker, he a psychologist, they asked to talk with the police commissioner.

"The commissioner is not in. You may wait for him. I'll go see," answered the guard, who then went to the inside offices.

The couple remained behind, waiting in the hall, seeing the indifference of the radio operator, buried in his newspaper.

Half a minute later, two more comrades arrived. They had had an automobile accident and were coming to file a report. Nothing had changed in the hall, and the radio room officer remained buried in his paper.

1300 Hours

Four more comrades were to arrive, wearing air force uniforms, along with a female comrade. Seconds turned into minutes, but still no news of them. Concerned, the two couples in the hall saw another minute go by. Where were they? What had happened? The truth was that at the very moment they were to leave for the police station, they could not find the machine gun clips. Turning the hearse upside down in their search, they concluded that they had forgotten them. They would still take the machine gun, however, in order to make an impression and if someone should refuse to be intimidated, they still had the short arms.

The search cost them time and made them arrive late. Instead of four, there were three, the comrade accompanying the coordinator having failed to appear.

At 1302 hours, while the woman comrade watched the door, one of the "Air Force officers" went to the radio office, while the other joined the victims of the automobile accident and the psychologist and social worker went to the commissioner's office.

The radio room officer was taken prisoner and the radio destroyed, without any problem other than the impossibility of making the guy recover from his state of stupor.

There was no one in the commissioner's office, but the "head honcho" had left his authority there: Hanging on a hook were his revolver in its holster and his saber. On the desk was a French 22-caliber pistol. The revolver and pistol were taken without any resistance by the psychologist, while the social worker searched the drawers and papers in the desk. Then they heard a shot.

While in front, the radio office and commissioner's office were being taken, in the patio the accident victims and air force officer were in charge of taking anyone in the administrative office, the following room and bedroom into custody. Previous inspections had shown the bedroom to be a single room with two doors, but it was actually two rooms without any door between them.

With six men in custody, plus the radio room officer, who were being placed against the wall, one of the accident victims saw a uniformed man running down the first hall. Shouting at him not to try to escape, he shot at him.

The officer, Sergeant Olivera, was in the second bedroom, to which he returned upon being surprised and from which he fired a couple of shots at the window of the room adjoining the office, breaking the glass so as to warn those outside.

Hearing the first shot, the psychologist left the commissioner's office, going to the patio through the second corridor, from which he could see the sergeant returning to the position in which he had been found before firing the shots. Aiming at the comrade over the patio, Olivera pulled the trigger but the revolver was jammed. The comrade fired several shots back at him and Olivera fled and hid in the bedroom, wounded in the arm.

At this point, 1304 hours, there were five comrades in the patio. The person accompanying the coordinator arrived. Three more were in front: the comrade who continued to inspect the commissioner's papers, and the other woman comrade and the armed forces officer standing guard at the entry.

#### Line and Wire

Locked in the room and refusing to come out, the sergeant was then threatened with a grenade. So serious did the threat appear to those against the wall that one of them exclaimed: "No, don't kill him! Let him surrender!" The sergeant immediately came out.

The Republic Bank team was then notified that as a support group, they should remain on the opposite corner because with the police station taken, the action could begin.

In the back, the comrades began to tie up the prisoners with wire. At the same time, the comrades talked to them, explaining the MLN line to them.

Wire and reasons, reasons and wire, and when the latter was done, the other would be given, until someone told a comrade that he would be tied up and heard the following reply: "I am the inmate."

The comrade was surprised, not knowing when he was taken out of the cell and put with the others. "And why are you in jail?" he asked, continuing to tie him up.

"For butchering a cow."

For the man, who was not an agent of repression, the "line" took on a special hue. It is not known whether it had any effect. It was only learned, long afterward, that the man, at his butchershop somewhere in Canelones, displays the wire used to tie him up, hanging on the wall as a memento of his involuntary participation in the operation.

Securely tied, the eight were then locked up in the cells.

A few minutes later, the commissioner and deputy commissioner fell into the trap, and what a trap! They had to have known that something out of the ordinary was going on at the police station. And yet, they arrived and went in, more frightened than on the alert. After they were taken prisoner, a man appeared at the door and looked in. The armed forces officer ran after him but he fled. When they began to frisk the commissioner, he said, without even being asked, that he had a weapon in his inside pocket, emphasizing his words by nodding toward his breast pocket. Obeying his repeated sign, the comrades found a 22 revolver in his pocket. A short-barreled 38 was taken from the deputy commissioner.

Questioned about the mistreatment and punishment inflicted on comrades arrested some time previously in a Pando field, they stammered out a denial.

Overcome with fright, they were marched off to the cells. A few kicks in the rear hastened the slow steps of the commissioner.

The time passed quickly. Two comrades continued to guard the entry, while two others went over papers in the commissioner's office and other offices. One guarded the cells and the remaining comrades readied the weapons they would take.

At 1314 hours, the order was given to evacuate the police station. Two omissions were then noted: 1 -- The MLN banner, that of Artigas with a five-point yellow star on a red stripe and a T of the same color, was to have been hoisted in front of the station upon leaving, but it was not brought. 2 -- Nor did they bring the leaflets to distribute. Only two or three were left on the floor of the station.

Of the long weapons, only a few German Mauser rifles were taken, along with all the short weapons.

With four comrades in the hearse and the others in cars of other teams, all arrived at the local cemetery, the gathering point for returning to Montevideo.

#### D. Fire Station

The fire station occupied an 8 X 35-meter lot. On the right, the dividing wall separating it from the police station and on the left, along the other dividing wall, a construction 3 meters wide ending 10 meters from the back wall. That building had five different areas: the first two for offices, plus a cafeteria, lounge and dormitory.



In the middle of the lot was a shed for tools, and so on. Except for the last 10 meters in the back, a roof extended from the construction, partially supported by the shed, the rest by several posts. Two of these in the front, between the construction and the police station dividing wall, framed an entry 4 meters wide, where a guard was stationed. Between the entry and the shed, the motorized pump was parked.

The team: four comrades and one vehicle. Scheduled to go into action at 1300 hours.

Meeting place: the interdepartmental bus monitor station, 80 meters from the target and on the sidewalk across the street.

The four had arrived at the appointed hour: 1258. Dino and Eno arrived by their own means and Roli and Hocho came in the vehicle, leaving it a block away.

Moving toward the barracks, they saw the three "air force officers."

The latter, in order to be seen, would come round the corner openly, on the edge of the sidewalk. However, in addition to being late, they turned the corner walking next to the wall and entered the station without being seen. At 1301, then 1302 hours, still no air force officers. At 1303 hours, they decided to go see what had happened. Beginning to move forward in pairs at a distance of 2 meters, they heard a shot, which told them that the officers were already in the station. They speeded up their steps. Upon hearing the shot, the barracks guard, as casually as one might watch a fly overhead, lazily turned his head in the direction of the station, only his head. The rest of his body, from head to foot, was a study in immobility and after a moment, he turned his head back to its normal position.

Two meters ahead of the others as planned, Mocho, passing in front of the guard, took out his weapon so the guard would see him and kept walking. Finally, the man's curiosity was a little piqued and he turned in that direction, at which moment the three behind grabbed him. More shots were heard inside the station and broken glass flew onto the sidewalk. The guard, immobilized by the comrades, repeated his sleepy movement, a head with eyes, back and forth between the police station to the comrades and back to the station in a complete state of stupidity.

The comrades marched him into the offices where they were to take the armed personnel supposedly there into custody. In the meantime, Mocho, who walked only a little over a meter beyond the guard, entered straight into the shed and upon seeing that no one was there, proceeded on to the cafeteria to prevent anyone from coming out or from leaving the other rooms. With those in the offices under guard, another comrade would come to help. The door was closed and it was impossible to open it. He then went to the lounge, where he met up with Roli who, upon finding no one in the office, immediately proceeded along the outside of the shed to the back and to the lounge. The two entered, but found no one. Moving on to the dormitory, they found six or seven men, some on their feet and others sitting on their beds and getting dressed. Seeing

the comrades' guns pointed at them and hearing the "Hands up!" and "Freeze!", they remained frozen with fear and surprise. They were told to go outside, but heard nothing.

Turned into zombies, they had to be taken by the arm and alternately push and pull them out.

In the restroom, Roli encountered special resistance. With his back to the door, a fat man was urinating. "Hands up!" Of course, at least one of the man's hands was occupied and he paid no attention whatsoever. Not even out of curiosity did he turn his head.

"Hands up, stupid, and get out!" Still feigning deafness, the fat man sluggishly finished his duty and only then turned around. He then looked at Roli, aiming his weapon at him and insulting him, and without being surprised in the slightest, raised his hands with disdain, resigned. Firemen are certainly economic in their movements!

In the meantime, something was also going on in the office. Through a window, Eno saw a fireman coming, went out to meet him, aimed his gun at him and took him inside. The man protested and begged not to be shot because his wife was about to arrive. He calmed down.

Taking down the ask, presuming they would take it with them, he asked that they leave it because he would lose his job. They explained that they would not take it with them, that they would leave it in a specific place, which they did upon withdrawing.

With the guard, the two from the dormitory and the fat man, they were taken to the back and told to lean against the wall, where they were guarded by Dilo and Mocho. There, in the back, contact was made with the police station comrades in order to exchange news.

At the front entry, Eno and Roli, to be helped by Mocho, remained in charge of what would turn out to be the most ticklish task of the station takeover. It began straightaway when, on the opposite sidewalk, an officer returning to the police station after eating was intercepted. He was taken prisoner without any problem and Eno passed him to Mocho, who took him to the back. After one or two minutes, also on the opposite sidewalk coming from the bus monitor station, a pair of officers, their hands on their holsters, came running to the police station. But at 20 meters from the barracks, seeing Eno, Rli and Mocho armed, they suddenly changed directions. They then crossed to the other sidewalk. From the entry posts, Roli and Eno went after them to the edge of the sidewalk, aiming and shouting at them. Mocho was also aiming at them, but from his position because he had to watch the back to see whether Dilo was in any difficulty. Seeing Eno and Roli advance, the police came to a halt and waved for the comrades to come closer. Roli answered in the same fashion. After a few seconds of "Come here" and "No, you come here" with the hands, one of the police officers again took off and dived into an entry. After a few seconds, the other did the same.

From the time the guards appeared until they zoomed into the vestibule, the comrades faced a double problem, a double concern: On the one hand, the two soldiers 15 and 20 meters away resisting intimidation, and on the other, behind them, 60 meters away and forming a background, the people thronging onto the sidewalk into the line of fire. Along with these worries, a new one: What would the soldiers do now? Disappear inside in order to take flight or try to get up on the flat roofs?

The news was passed on to Dilo and the police station comrades so they would double their vigilance. And the incidents continued. Right after the two officers had taken refuge, the commissioner and deputy commissioner showed up on the corner opposite the station. Walking on the sidewalk, they saw the armed comrades but continued, following a straight line to the police station.

After a minute or two, an OSE [State Board of Sanitation] collector and the person with him were taken prisoner and shown to the back.

The problem of the spectators continued, or rather, grew. Along with the people at the bus monitor station, while blocking the intersection and and bus full of passengers, another smaller group was forming in front on a pharmacy on the same sidewalk 35 meters from the corner. Two human waves stubbornly continued to form, advancing or withdrawing as the comrades gestured or shouted at them to withdraw.

Now another uniformed man on the opposite sidewalk walked toward the police station. Roli and Mocho went after him like cats after a mouse. Purring, they returned with the prisoner, who showed a card to prove that he was a transit agent and unarmed. Halfway across the street, the three saw a little old fellow with what appeared to be two hatboxes held in front of him, walking slowly across from the barracks entry. Roli and Mocho shouted at him to stop, to go back in, but the old man obstinately refused to obey. Again the order and the insults and finally, grumbling, the old man dropped the boxes on the ground and entered. Eno, again in the back, remained at the gate. Taken by surprise, he could not prevent an escape: From one of the boxes, a parrot flies out!

In back, the transit agent walked along the wall, while the old man was kindly treated. Harmless, he was not ordered along with the others, but just left, silently wandering. A few steps here, a few steps there, observing, watching the comrades, looking at those lined up against the wall, understanding nothing of what was going on. Finally, all by himself, he slowly moved to take his place at the wall along with the others.

To questions from some prisoners, Dilo and Roli explain the reasons for the operation, why they would take the station, reassuring them that nothing would happen to them.

In the front, the crowd continued to grow, advancing and retreating, retreating and advancing. An old woman broke off from the larger group and walked, purse in hand, toward the barracks. Shouts and gestures caused her to retreat.

A young woman then approached the office door. How and when did she enter without being seen? Perhaps when they were after the transit agent. Who could she be? Perhaps the wife of the fireman taken at the beginning.

"Come here! Get out of there! Come here!"

But the woman did not move. Hearing more shouts and seeing Eno approach, she went in and closed the door.

At 1318 hours, the order to withdraw was given from the police station, telling the comrades not to waste time or overload the car. Nor should they tie up the 15 prisoners, leaving them facing the wall, hands above their heads, or take some of the things they had intended.

Coming back out into the street, they went straight to the vehicle, with the people silently making way for them.

In the car, thinking they could help those with problems -- shots were heard -- they decided to change their route to reach the meeting place. Going the wrong way on some streets, they hit a few of the points in the city but find no one. Everything is over.

#### E. UTE Telephone Central

Located on the corner of 18 de Julio and Zorrilla, it has entries on both streets about 8 meters from each corner. The public entry is on 18 de Julio, while the personnel door is on Zorrilla. On the intersection corners is the Retirement Fund Bank and the Industrial School.

Unable to find any plausible excuse to enter that place, the survey was reduced to what could be observed from the outside. From the Calle Zorrilla door, one could see a patio and an office with two or three employees, men and women, while from the door on 18 de Julio, one could see the room where the telephone operators were working. This meant that the plan drafted would be subject to many unforeseen events. Practically nothing was known of the internal layout of the building and this would only be learned during the action itself. Regarding the people that would have to be taken into custody, it was estimated, based on a count of personnel and people entering, that there would be about 15, 8 or 10 of which would be employees and the rest customers. There was still another problem: Since there was no technical advice, it was not known what key mechanical elements would put the central out of commission. For that reason, the communications cables entering on the flat roof would be cut, along with any cable found in the building. At the same time, the batteries would be disconnected and the key system rendered useless. It was thought that it would perhaps not be necessary to take so many precautions in order to block the central totally, but when in doubt, they would be taken. The slightest risk could not be taken with respect to the complete sureness of achieving the objective.

In order to make the blockade last longer -- it was not known how long repairs would take -- 50 meters of copper wire would be taken to simulate a bomb connected to the cables cut.

The team involved in the action was to be made up of seven comrades: six men and a woman, and a vehicle.

1258 hours. While six comrades waited in the immediate vicinity of the target, the others waited in the car near the police station for the "air force officers" to enter, which would happen at 1302 hours. It would then leave for the central with its lights on, which would be seen from a distance by those waiting for them and enable them to gain time.

Simultaneously receiving the signal, a couple would then enter the central from 18 de Julio, along with four more comrades from the side door.

The couple would stand behind a screen where they could not be seen by the telephone operators or the few customers still arriving and waiting to be helped. Of the four comrades, while one would block the Calle Zorrilla door, the others would go inside. Once in the office, they would offer an explanation: They were investigative police having received a report that a bomb had been planted in the building. They would have to make an inspection, for which purpose it would be necessary to cut off all communication. For their part, the employees, showing that they understood, explain that such an interruption did not depend on them, but on telecommunications, and that the comrades should call to the central director who lived closeby. Lucco, head of the team, would do so, accompanied by a comrade, but decided to waste no more time and took a total of 11 employees, men and women, prisoner. Six appeared out of nowhere and joined the group talking. Taken to a room, they were guarded by a comrade who blocked the door and who had arrived at the patio. Two more went up to the roof with the proper tools. Lucco went to the operators room where, along with Barsa and the woman comrade waiting there, they took eight employees and three customers prisoner. Although no one put up any resistance, the surprise and bewilderment of the operators were so great that they heard nothing and remained seated, immobile, as if glued to their seats and earphones. They had to be shouted at. Some had to have their earphones removed and practically be unglued from their seats, with the comrades leading them by the arm to the room where the prisoners were being held. While Barsa went to look for the director, Lucco watched the door and kept an eye on the action in the rest of the building. Across from the door on 18 de Julio, a comrade, the seventh, sat in a vehicle parked in the middle of the sidewalk and watched everything going on in the street. In the midst of cutting the cables on the roof, the two comrades heard sobs. Since what had to be done could be accomplished by one person working alone, one of the men went to see what was going on and found a customer, a pregnant woman, who had given way to a case of nerves. With the effective cooperation of the employees, she was taken care of and calmed down. Failing to find the central director at home, Barsa returned alone. In that situation, Lucco decided to go to the employees and require their cooperation. Barsa stood guard at the door, remaining in contact with the comrade with the backup car. Three minutes had gone by and everything was still normal in the street. At the Industrial School, the happy sound of voices, running back and forth, the youthful noise of the arriving students; at the Retirement Bank, a long line of tired old people and persons having experienced who knows how many years of suffering and misery. From one corner to the other, the eyes of the comrade in the vehicle roam the streets, thinking of the younger generation, whose life would surely not be like that of those poor old people.

Lucco called from the group of prisoners to the operators and talked with them in the patio. He explained and argued, persuasively and in a brotherly fashion. Not only did the comrades not have anything against them, but on the contrary, the struggle of the Tupamaros is on behalf of the people, the workers. The cooperation they were seeking in this case would help all the people being held because they would gain time and avoid the risk of a shootout with the police.

The operators told where the batteries were and the power was shut off. The cables had already been cut also.

All the while, customers kept arriving and had to be taken into custody and put in the room with the other 20 persons, 5 more than anticipated.

Barsa remained at the door, although inside, the comrade in the street stayed in the backup car. A couple watched the prisoners, while Lucco and the remaining two comrades cut cables inside the building, linking them with copper wire and then joining them together, simulating a fuse.

They were involved in this task when the comrade in the backup car reported that a truck with a policeman was approaching. When everything was ready to receive him, the policeman ran in and stopped short with a 45 in his belly. Relieved of his revolver, he marched off to the room of the "penitents" where he turned out to be very useful, asking everyone to remain calm.

For his part, after getting the cop down from the truck, the comrade in the backup car immobilized the driver. When the comrades went back to the work with the cables, the news arrived of another cop running to the building. Lucco and Barsa waited for him, but the man kept going, who knows why, and the two had to run after him and catch him at the corner. He resisted, tried to draw his weapon, but was subdued by force. Relieved of his weapon, he was pushed into the central building.

As the Retirement Fund customers, students at the Industrial School and many passersby came to observe, the commotion in the street began to grow.

Nervous and afraid, the cop reached the room where his colleague, fanatically calm, tried to calm him down.

But more and more people arrived. The reason was now clear: Every customer trying to phone or who was trying to phone and could not do so first kept trying, then left the telephone and marched off to the central to ask why or protest. There, without time to say anything, they were marched off to a room where no more would fit. Under these circumstances, the policeman calmly explained to the comrades the situation they had created and asked them to find another room. It was a sensible, organized idea. The man was obeyed and the prisoners were divided into two groups.

By the time the deadline for leaving came, between 40 and 45 persons were in the rooms, while the crowd in the street continued to grow.



With everything ready for the evacuation, the prisoners were gathered together and both the reasons for the operation and the *raison d'être* of the Movement were explained. Once they were all locked up, leaflets were then scattered throughout the premises.

When the time came for some of the comrades to leave in the getaway car, some comrades stayed behind in the doorway, when a customer arrived angrily protesting. It was a lame old man who walked with a cane. In order not to waste more time locking him up, the comrades told him where to go to make his complaint.

"Yes sir, you go there, way to the back, on the left."

Without even dreaming what he would find, the man went in, quickly in spite of his lameness, proceeding toward the rooms where the prisoners were.

Outside, the driver of the getaway car hoped to see the motorcycle of the coordinator -- which did not exist -- in order to order the departure.

Soon the cars of the other teams appeared, moving down 18 de Julio toward the cemetery. Lucco, who knew the coordinator, saw him in one of the cars and the getaway car took off, bringing up the rear.

#### F. Republic Bank

The Republic Bank is located on the corner of General Artigas and Solis, with two doors opening onto the street. The main door is on the corner and the second on Calle Solis, used by personnel. Part of the same building and next to the bank on Calle General Artigas is the manager's home. An inside door provides communication between the house and the bank.

A team of 14 comrades: 13 men and a woman, and two vehicles: a getaway car and the Kombi, were sent to the bank.

The team was divided into three groups: one to enter as soon as the bank opened and strategically located awaiting the simultaneous arrival of the two other groups that would come minutes later, using the main door and the door for personnel.

At 1300 hours, the getaway car with seven comrades parked across from the police station, for whose takeover it would act as a backup car. In addition, the Kombi, with three comrades and the seven employees of the funeral home would park on Solis, a few meters away from the corner and opposite the bank. While one comrade would remain watching the funeral home employees, the other two would leave the vehicle and enter the bank. Seconds later, completing the first team, a male and a female comrade would join them. The latter, who would have been waiting nearby, would take up their stations at each teller's window, while the former would be along the counter separated in such a way as to be able to control the entire interior at the right time.

Mingled among a dozen customers, the minutes went by. They were prepared to "propose" their undertaking to the employee who would eventually decide to take care of them.

At 1303 hours, when notified that the police station was under control, the comrades in the getaway car left for the bank. A hand waving a white handkerchief outside the car was the green light for the other teams: the UTE, Pando Bank and the Pan de Azucar Bank, to go into action.

Getting out a block from the bank and going around the block, they found themselves next to the side door with two more comrades waiting in the vicinity.

After a few seconds giving those getting out a little time, the getaway car once again resumed its route down General Artigas and parked at the corner opposite the bank.

While the other team rang the side doorbell, a "policeman" carrying a machine gun got out of the getaway car, along with a "high bank official" with a briefcase and his "secretary." While the trio crossed the street and entered the bank, two comrades remained in the car. It was 1304 hours. In the corner formed by the counter and the manager's office, the guard sitting on his chair looked bored and sleepy. The commanding voice of the "colleague" made him jump.

"Accompany us into the vault; we have a deposit."

"Of course."

Before the colleague was even in, he pulled out his gun.

"What's wrong? Aren't you one of ours?" he said, opening his eyes wide and finally waking up as the comrades disarmed him.

Several events then happened simultaneously. The male and female comrades assigned to the tellers immobilized them, pointing their guns at them through the grills. The other two jumped over the counter and subdued the employees and customers. One of the two comrades who remained in the getaway car entered the manager's home, found no one, went to the manager's office and took the manager and three employees prisoner. The quartet that entered by the side door on Calle Solis took anyone who might open up into custody. While one remained guarding the door, the others inspected the bathrooms and three other areas, taking the second employee prisoner also who, along with the other, was taken to the bank lobby to accompany those already against the wall with their hands in the air. At the same time, others were in the same situation in the manager's office.

A total of 27 persons were taken prisoner: 16 employees, 10 customers and 1 policeman.

Everything happened with dizzying speed and perfect synchronization, as if a single thread moved all the groups. In less than a minute, the bank had been

taken. The threat of shooting anyone who might touch the alarm -- there were several buttons -- had its effect.

Once the premises were secured, six comrades: three in the lobby and the same number in the manager's office, watched the prisoners. Two continued to remain in the cars, one in the backup and the other in the Kombi with the funeral home employees. One watched the side door and two more, one of them the fake policeman, remained outside, while the three others separated the manager and the tellers from the prisoners and marched them to the cash drawers to get the money. At gunpoint, the manager and one cashier helped put the money in bags. The other teller had to be given a chair because he was nearly fainting with fright. While the money went into the bags, the "policeman" with the machine gun in the street walked back and forth, sometimes friendly, sometimes commanding, controlling the bank corner. He walked back and forth, keeping the people at a distance, preventing them from taking the bank sidewalk, although two old ladies were helped across the street. He would do the same and more than once with children going to the school across the street.

Two transit inspectors then appeared, well-known and hated in the area. They stopped before the manager's house, where one intended to enter. The policeman prevented them from doing so and told them to use the sidewalk across the street.

The people who continued to form a crowd and who by that time knew that the occupants of the bank and the policeman were Tupamaros laughed at the obedience of the inspectors. Although against their will, they obeyed and turned around. After walking a few meters, one of them stopped a car passing by and got in. But it had not even reached the corner when the comrade policeman once again stopped the vehicle to ask the transit inspector where he was going.

"To tell what is happening," he replied.

"Don't worry. Everything is arranged. Get out."

The people once again laughed when the inspector got out and the car continued on its way, obeying the comrade's order.

"Get moving, get moving," he said, pointing to the street with his machine gun.

A woman about 50 walked toward the policeman although she knew she could not use the bank sidewalk. She could not decide whether to get on or off the sidewalk. Not wishing to disobey or obey, she kept one foot on the sidewalk and one off, in a truly comic attitude. The policeman ordered her to the sidewalk across the street. The woman continued to hesitate, wanting to approach and go away. Finally, she drew closer and, pointing to the bank, told the policeman: "How nice! Incredible!"

Scarcely had the woman left when a shot was heard in the bank coming from the manager's office. There a comrade whose armband had fallen off was wounded by a female comrade who accidentally shot him as he tried to pick it up. Helped

by other comrades, the wounded man was taken to the getaway car. It was Fernan Pucurull, who was later murdered by the police when he went to a region where a trap had been set up.

In the meantime, a single comrade remained in the manager's office in charge of the prisoners.

Under these conditions and because of the accident, it was decided to suspend the action. The comrades at the cash drawers who had bagged only half of the money asked for a little more time. When the money was ready, the order to evacuate was given, which order was not heard by the comrade who was alone in the manager's office. Those who might have realized his absence were with the wounded man in the getaway car. The vehicles left, both overloaded.

The comrade who stayed in the manager's office stayed five more minutes, then noticed that the bank had been evacuated and that the police had arrived. Taking advantage of the confusion to make it to the street, someone pointed him out and he was arrested by the police.

#### G. Pan de Azucar Bank

Located on Calle General Artigas, it is almost in the middle of the block and about 35 meters away from the Pando Bank.

A team of six comrades was sent to the bank. The getaway car that had to be left because of mechanical problems at Kilometer Post 40 was for them. In the outskirts of the city, it would be impossible to get a car, as they had thought.

At 1250 hours, the six comrades were at a cafe opposite the bank debating about how to get a car when they saw the bank manager arrive in his Citroen. They had seen him during their survey of the bank. Having solved the problem, the comrades scattered and waited for 1300 hours to strike.

Seeing the signal to begin the action, five of them entered the bank in groups: first three, then two, taking up strategic locations in order to take the bank at the oral signal from the sixth comrade who would enter last and almost immediately after the second group. But a few steps away from the door, this comrade saw a person observing the comrades entering the Pando Bank. They rapidly pointed their guns at him and, just as planned for those taken prisoner in the street, took him into the bank. He then entered "his" bank and, at the right signal, three comrades took the employees and customers in the lobby into custody, while the remaining two did the same with those in the manager's office.

The 11 persons taken prisoner: 5 customers and 6 employees, remained in a room guarded by two comrades. The car keys and a pistol were taken from the manager. One cashier's keys to the money draw were taken and the money was bagged by the two. A fifth comrade remained waiting in the hall, while guarding the door was the responsibility of the last comrade to enter the building.

On both corners, groups of curious onlookers formed. After 3 or 4 minutes, a policeman emerged from one of the groups and walked toward the bank, as if in slow motion. The comrade watching the door walked toward him, but discreetly, like any citizen walking on the sidewalk. Scarcely had he passed him when he turned around, stuck a gun in his back and led him to the bank. The uniformed officer trembled like a leaf. Surely he started to the bank, not out of his own wishes but rather, compelled by someone in the group, which would explain the slowness of his walk and the fear that controlled him.

Having returned to his post, a woman was in the bank doorway with a child, having come to cash a check. After explaining that she would have to wait a while, she was turned over to the comrade in the hall.

With the money in the bags and the prisoners scolded, the place was evacuated. This team would be the first to reach the final meeting place.

#### H. Pando Bank

Located on General Artigas, the bank also has a door on the side street and a third on the corner. The latter and the door on General Artigas are for the public and the side door is for personnel.

The inside layout is as follows: Enclosing the work area, a space approximately 8 by 7 meters, a U-shaped counter parallel to General Artigas, the corner, the side street and a dividing wall. Between one of the legs of the U and the dividing wall is the manager's office, while between the other leg and the wall on the side street is the legal office. Next to the door on General Artigas are tellers 1 and 2. Entering by this door, a little over a meter to the right, is a kind of basement with chests for personal effects: jewels, and so on. Opposite the corner is teller 3. On the inside of the counter, near the first two cashiers and occupying another basement is the treasurer. Generally, when the latter cashboxes are open to the public, No 3 is not, and vice versa.

The team assigned to this target was made up of eight male comrades and a woman, plus a vehicle.

Seeing the signal to go into action, two comrades entered by the corner door and went to the legal office area, while on General Artigas, a couple made for the manager's office. Two more immediately entered and took up positions next to cashbox 3 and the other between the General Artigas door and the basement with the chests, whose extinguished light indicated that no one was there. Despite this fact, the comrade nevertheless went down to check. A seventh comrade remained outside, opposite the corner, as a liaison between the outside and those inside, watching the street and receiving those taken prisoner outside the Pan de Azucar Bank, some 30 meters away. (This transfer resulted from the larger capacity of the Pando Bank and the larger number of comrades waiting there also.)

Those entering had some business to conduct in case they should be attended to during the time between their entry and that of two comrades: Alfredo Cultelli and Ricardo Zabalza, whose presence would initiate the takeover.

The couple waited next to the manager's office and the counter, where an employee and a customer were involved in a heated discussion.

In front of the legal office, one of the comrades very discreetly knocked at the door to see if it was unlocked, which it was. Scarcely had he returned to his comrade when he was waited on by an employee, whom he asked about houses to rent.

The employee had not even begun to reply when he heard "This is a holdup; we are Tupamaros," spoken by Zabalza, while Cultelli jumped onto the counter. The latter, machine gun in hand, controlled the whole lobby from there. Only a few seconds went by, after which he jumped inside and set about inspecting the strongbox, while Cultelli was already taking the tellers from windows 1 and 2 prisoner.

Simultaneously with Zabalza and in order to give a greater impression that the place was totally taken over, thus avoiding any attempted reaction, the comrades repeated the phrase in each area and entered their own areas.

Cashbox 3: The comrade took customers in the sector prisoner.

Manager's office: The comrade went in looking for the manager, while her companion, weapon in hand, intimidated employees and customers in the sector, with the exception of those arguing. Totally absorbed and removed from anything not related to the problem being handled, the employee lifted his head and, without even considering the 9-mm aimed at him, said: "Yes, yes, wait just a moment," and once again delved into the discussion.

But if his first reaction was quick, equally quick was his awakening to reality, including the robbery, and put his arms in the air. No more problems there.

On the other hand, in the manager's office, the female comrade found no one and moved on to the lobby, where she found the manager among the other employees.

Legal office: The employee answering the questions about houses to rent stood with his mouth open in front of the 45 pistol aimed at him, while the other, big and fat, slipped off to the inside rooms. One of the comrades kicked open the week door of the office and ran after the fugitive. He found him to be as ingenuous as he was fat: The man had hidden behind the little swinging door of a toilet where he could scarcely squeeze his bulk.

Coffers section: The comrade took customers in this section into custody and led them to the manager's office. In the brief period of time until they would be taken with the employees, the customers were made to stand with their hands on the counter, for if they had their hands over their heads, they might attract the attention of anyone seeing them from the outside.

With all the sections taken over and having inspected the inside rooms to see if someone might be in them, employees and customers were brought together,



about 25 in all, and made to lie down on the floor in the space between the desks and the back wall of the bank. Women and old people remained seated in chairs given to them. The manager was asked for the keys to the vault, which he turned over with no problem, avoiding any need for the sharp, persuasive little knife.

According to the plan, the location of the comrades was now as follows:

Outside across from the corner, one comrade. Inside, between the corner door and cashbox 3, the comrade who took the customers in the area prisoner, as a liaison with the outside. The prisoners he received would be transferred, in order to be led to the back of the lobby, to one of the comrades in the legal section, there for that purpose.

Watching the General Artigas door, the comrade who was initially between it and the coffers would take anyone entering into custody and turn him over to the manager's office sector, whence he would go with the others.

At the back of the lobby guarding the prisoners would be the female comrade and the comrade who took the fat man in the bathroom prisoner.

While Zabalza bagged the money from the vault, Cultelli did the same with that from the cashboxes, but with the bad luck that because of the worn safety of his Lugger, he accidentally fired two shots. Since the weapon was aiming at the floor, no damage was done except to the tranquillity of the atmosphere.

As the minutes went by, a pair of customers arriving was taken prisoner and one person and a police officer scared to death were transferred from the Pan de Azucar Bank.

The prisoners were given leaflets and explanations of the line, while the bank officers and employees in particular were told the position of the MLN in the long bank dispute that recently ended, during which banker Pellegrini Giampietro had been kidnaped. He was still in the hands of the organization.

Because of all this and seeing the little money in the vault, Zabalza called the manager and told him to tell him where there was more. The man convincingly explained that it was because a shipment had been sent to the Republic Bank the day before.

When it came time to leave, the comrade came in from the street to speed things up because "things are getting hot." Near the bank was a sea of curious on-lookers and there was a constant stream of gawkers on General Artigas. More time was requested to finish bagging the money and the request was granted. But a minute later he entered again: The people outside had been joined by the call of a Republic Bank alarm. The evacuation was ordered.

Nilco, followed by a comrade, saw a policeman running in, shouting and waving a revolver. They retreated, notified the others and took up positions in the door and window, whose glass broke, shooting it out with the policeman. When his hat was shot off, the cop disappeared behind the getaway car where he had taken a position, diagonally across from the corner.

The comrades thought they had wounded him, that they had shot him in the head, and when they approached the car, they saw that the man was dragging himself between it and the edge of the sidewalk. Nilco, going around the car and a pickup parked ahead, wanted to finish him off but a comrade held him back, telling him to leave him alone, that "the poor guy is wounded and won't bother us anymore." But the "poor guy" got on the sidewalk as soon as he was around the car and slipped through the door of a bar. Then appearing at one of the windows, he fired at the car as it left.

Dragging along -- with nine comrades inside and a flat tire -- the car went a few blocks before taking a one-way street in the wrong direction. Halfway down the block, a cop standing in the middle of the street raised his hand to stop the car. Seeing that he was about to be run over, he grabbed his weapon and jumped on the sidewalk. The comrades responded to the fire of the cop until he tore into a bar. The cop's shots wounded no one, but did hit a man coming out of the bar and who, mistaken by the cop for a Tupamaro, was prevented from receiving medical assistance and bled to death in a cell. Although the shot was attributed to the comrades, their testimony, faithful to the truth, however, harsh, along with technical evidence, showed the opposite. Naturally, the press was very careful not to tell the truth.

On the rims, with nearly all the glass broken and the top turned into an accordion because of the collision with the pickup in its way, it looked as if the getaway car would not reach the final meeting place, but it did.

#### I. Return

Once all the teams had returned to the cemetery, the Pando Bank comrades quickly abandoned the car and transferred to others, where they found the coordinator and the female comrade whose car has suffered a broken axle.

Led by the hearse and followed by five cars, the funeral cortege left for Montevideo at 1320 hours, taking Las Piedritas road. They did not return by the Maldonado road because even though it was more direct, it was assumed that the repressive forces, now alerted, would use it.

At the intersection of Las Piedritas with Road 84, 10 kilometers from the cemetery, it was decided to lighten the load of the cars and the seven funeral home employees were left behind. Although they protested, the situation was explained to them; overloaded cars that could only proceed slowly and a wounded comrade, Pucurull, who needed quick medical attention. They were let out and their place in the Kombi was taken by comrades from the other cars. At the same time, since there was no medical service in Pucurull's column, he was transferred to the hearse carrying the comrades of a column that did. They resumed the journey at a greater speed, but still not fast enough. The lead was taken by the Republic Bank car since the comrades in that team knew the road better.

The cortege passed through Suarez, 15 kilometers from the cemetery and one could observe complete calm, the alarm having not reached that location.

Three kilometers later, upon arriving at a place called Cassarino, they noticed the Highway Police always posted there. While one of the officers standing next to his vehicle aimed a machine gun at the caravan as it approached, the other in the middle of the road waved for them to stop. His attitude did not demonstrate any great conviction, perhaps as if he doubted that it was not truly a funeral cortege. Whatever the case, the comrades pretended to obey their signals, although with their weapons ready. They slowed down and as the police waited for them to stop, accelerated, drove by and took off without any problem.

Upon reaching the junction of the Andaluz and Osvaldo Rodriguez roads, already 24 kilometers from their point of departure, the caravan split up. The hearse and two cars took Osvaldo Rodriguez and, scattering along the way, would reach Montevideo with the wounded comrade and the money from the Pando and Pan de Azucar banks, amounting to some 7 million pesos. At Camino Repetto, they passed a vehicle of the Metropolitan Guard, a blue pickup of the so-called "pigs," rapidly heading for Pando.

The Kombi and the getaway cars from the Republic Bank and the fire station -- the latter by mistake -- turned to the left and took Camino Cruz del Sur. There, a kilometer and a half from the junction where the caravan was to split, a Gutbrod was seen with one wheel lifted off the ground by a jack, as if it were broken down. It was a proper pickup truck which, although old and dilapidated, still ran. The Kombi stopped alongside and the money from the Republic Bank, the weapons used and two comrades were transferred to it.

#### First Confrontation

While this transfer was taking place, the Republic Bank getaway car continued on its way. After about six blocks and after traveling to within 300 meters of Camino Repetto, the comrades noticed two patrol cars blocking the road, parked on a bridge some 50 meters before the road. They stopped and parked the vehicle on the shoulder.

It was 1340 hours and they had gone 26 kilometers. After a short discussion, five comrades went into the field heading for a mountain about 300 meters away, while two more remained hidden between the car and the fence. In a minute and a half, the backup car arrived with 12 comrades and the Kombi with 6. Coming at great speed, the latter slid into a ditch upon braking.

One of the patrol cars began to move slowly, while the comrades organized their plan for the confrontation. The car continued its slow motion forward: 200 meters, 150, 100, without pausing. At about 70 meters, the comrades began to fire with both short and long weapons, some in positions near the vehicles and others from their places near the fence. One comrade moved up a few meters, knelt down in the middle of the road and fired his Mauser. The patrol-car took three bullets, one of which destroyed the windshield, and stopped.

Another brief discussion: The repressive forces were receiving transmissions and guidance from the patrol cars. It was decided to retreat, some comrades

in the Kombi, which they tried to get back on the road, and the others moved toward the mountain. At this point, the Gutbrod arrived, its two occupants got out and followed the comrades crossing the field. Those working with the Kombi chose to leave in the pickup that had just arrived. One of them ran to catch up with the driver. The Gutbrod immediately turned around and eight comrades left in it, going back on Camino de Sur heading for Maldonado Road some 6 kilometers away. After traveling half the distance, they hid the bags containing the money in the grass on the banks of a gully. (Later, the money would be found by three children cutting the grass, who saw it but left the bags there. Sweeping the area, the police arrived late in the afternoon and questioned the children. They answered that they were cutting the grass, but said nothing about the money. When the cops began to empty the grass out of the bags, the smallest of the children showed where the money was, perhaps out of fear.)

Further on, the comrades left Camino Cruz del Sur and took secondary roads and finally, Camino Centauro. At about 400 meters from Camino Maldonado, four comrades got out and after hiding their weapons in a neighboring mountain, separated, heading for Camino Maldonado, where they would take a bus that would carry them to Montevideo without any problem.

The other four continued in the Gutbrod, which they abandoned on Camino Centauro a block from Camino Maldonado. They split up into teams and after walking crosscountry for a long time, reached the quarters -- which would later fall -- where they could change clothes and leave the area by bus.

#### Crosscountry

When the Gutbrod left, a group of about 20 comrades were heading crosscountry for a mountain. The group included three women. They passed the peak and crossed the Toledo Chico arroyo, still on foot, because it is a very slow stream. Some 200 meters further on, the group split in two. One went to the right, trying to reach Camino Cuchilla Grande, while the other tried to reach Maldonado, walking in the opposite direction. They presumed that the former was 3 or 4 kilometers away and the latter 2 or 3 kilometers away.

It was a disoriented march, a crosscountry escape. Gradually, nearly all the comrades grew confused. They did not know the terrain where they were or its location. They could only vaguely guess directions. Nor did they truly realize that time favors the enemy. Every minutes that goes by reduces the possibility of escaping.

After 5 minutes, a helicopter appeared flying low overhead, razing the field and without any doubt, radioing to the forces coming from Montevideo. Back and forth, appearing and disappearing. A few trees and barracks enabled the comrades to hide from the sweep. In the meantime, the group gradually broke up. In groups of two or three and even alone, the comrades separated. Some were left behind, others took different directions, while still others chose to remain hidden in the brush.

Step after step, field after field, occasionally a local who could give directions.

Field after field, step after step, going over fences, through ditches, gullies and ravines, while in the air the deafening rumble of the helicopter persisted. Soon the sirens joined the din from the four cardinal points, becoming louder, more intense and closer with every step. From time to time, from the high points the comrades could make out pigs, patrol cars, highway police.

After 10 minutes on foot and while the group was deliberating, two cops about 300 meters away fired at them. Without managing to decide whether to try to escape or hide until night, the fugitives scattered, leaving the cops behind, not following them. After 5 more minutes, Jorge Salerno, who was involved in the police station operation, and Arapey Cabrera ran into a patrol car. They changed directions and plunged into a eucalyptus grove about 100 meters from a street and a school ahead.

#### Fence and Death

The police opened fire from the patrol car, wounding Arapey Cabrera. Two bullets shattered his right arm. Salerno fired back until he ran out of ammunition. He then came out of the brush and, in full view of the cops, threw down his weapon and raised his arms in the air. At that point, he was cut down by shotgun fire.

In the meantime, ever more scattered and disoriented, the rest of the comrades continued their journey, between the screaming sirens and rumbling helicopters. Shots could be heard in different directions.

Some plunged into a zone of underbrush, going back and forth asking questions of the locals. Others fell into the hands of the repressive forces one by one.

A group of eight comrades, perhaps the largest at this point in time, walked for another 20 minutes and arrived at a relatively populated zone. Whether out of fear or curiosity, most of the people had left their houses and come out into the streets.

The eight went from house to house, villa to villa, until they reached a stretch of land whose ranch they passed, hiding in the thick vegetation. The pack of hounds immediately arrived and began firing right and left. Six comrades entered the ranch and two remained outside. Enrique Osano was hit in the knee. They put their hands over their heads and surrendered, but the cops continued to fire. Only their bad aim spoiled their murderous intentions.

Up to this point, this is what has been reconstructed from the accounts of comrades of what happened during the 25 minutes between the beginning of their march to the arrest of 16 male and 2 female comrades and the deaths of Jorge Salerno, Ricardo Zabalza and Alfredo Cultelli.

If the butchery carried out by the repressive forces were not enough to convince anyone that Cultelli and Zabalza shared Salerno's fate, as the days went

by, more elements were collected that confirmed the fact, also contained in the legal evidence. Zabalza shot it out with the Republican Guard. Wounded by a machine gun burst, he surrendered. Heading for the Republican Guard vehicle about 80 meters away, he talked with the officer, who asked him why he did not use the grenade he had. Zabalza explained that the purpose of the MLN struggle was not to kill policemen, but to put an end to the capitalist system in order to take power and build a better egalitarian, fraternal society.

Reaching the vehicle, the officers there hurled themselves on the prisoner, clamoring that they had to kill them all, according to Code W-1 of President Pacheco. The officer who had taken him prisoner tried to calm them down, but they left him there and once again went into the field.

It was reported that Zabalza "was killed in the shootout with police." His body showed a bullet wound consistent with a bullet entering the nape of the neck and lodging in the head. In addition, his skull was crushed, probably as the result of a blow with a rifle butt.

Cultelli's wounds showed that he was shot from the back and the front when his hands were raised over his head.

With respect to Salerno, it is known that they let him bleed to death because the officer in the group refused to grant the request of a newsman to call for an ambulance. The same officer trampled and kicked the wounded man deliberately.

#### Howling Pack

Among those arrested, two had bullet wounds and all the rest had different injuries because of their mistreatment.

The conduct of the repressive forces and particularly the Metropolitan Guard would provide enough to write about on the brutality, cruelty and sadism of hundreds of men having turned into savage beasts for a long time, with the difference that real beasts only kill to defend themselves or to eat. The torment of the comrades began when they were taken prisoner, continued during their transfer to Montevideo and culminated at Police Headquarters, the sewer of San Jose and Yi, the refuge and source of amusement of former men, animals of the worst kind, the most abject and cowardly of human beings.

However, one must recognize that the worst punishment and brutality took place at the hands of the Metropolitan Police, who practically controlled that sewer pit for hours.

Taken prisoner and handcuffed on the ground, not one comrade, man or woman, was spared beatings: punches, kicks, blows with gunbutts in the face, head, testicles or any part of the body. They trampled them and walked on their bodies, grinding the heels of their boots into the flesh. They deliberately aimed at wounds in order to pound where it hurt the most, while they screamed, laughed, insulted and threatened them with death. "We have to kill them all," "You won't leave here alive, you bastard," and so on. Using short and long weapons, they hit them in the head, breast, back of the neck, mouth, chest,



while moving their finger on the trigger, repeatedly making their prisoners savor the taste of death. All beat them and all threatened them. Some would finish and others would come. They fought to have turns to pound on their prey, on the wounds. Those finished would begin all over again, an interminable, insatiable pack of wild beasts.

The attitude of some Highway Police who fought over a prisoner that the Metropolitan Guard wanted to kill, the intervention of scattered elements of Intelligence and Liaison and the presence of reporters, as undesirable witnesses, saved the lives of some comrades.

In the vehicles carrying them to Montevideo, the beasts never rested. When they arrived at the sewer, bloody and bruised, the comrades had to go through a double line of "Metros," whose every punch and blow left its mark or tore out its hank of hair.

Once through the gauntlet, the party continued in the elevators, the cells, the interrogation sessions, wherever there was a comrade. The beasts laughed and grunted, even cried. Drunk with hysteria, the "Metros" were taken with an insatiable, grotesque orgy.

Every animal in the sewer abandoned his corner and joined in the fun. Even from the Fingerprinting Office came a dwarf to satisfy his thirst for beating.

In conclusion, we shall detail four cases that give an idea of what was done with the prisoners as a whole.

Arapey Cabrera: In the place where he fell wounded, they stood and jumped on his shattered arm, stuck the barrel of a 45 in his mouth, injuring his lips, gums, palate. At the Military Hospital, when he regained consciousness, the guards threatened him and moved the needle in his arm supplying plasma intravenously.

Enrique Osano: They stood on his body, tramped him, walked on him as if to suffocate him. He was kicked in the head, the face, wherever. He was then thrown in a ditch with his mouth underwater, his face in the mud. When he was taken to the vehicle, bleeding from the nose, ears and three wounds, two in the head and one in the knee, one of the animals shouted at him, pointing behind his ear: "Look, you don't have any blood here," and hit him there. Once in jail, when they noticed he had a bullet wound in the knee, they forced him to walk and when he could not any more, forced him to kneel, pulling him by the hair, pulling it out in bunches.

At the Military Hospital, they sewed up the head wound, without anesthesia...or thread.

Elbio Cardozo: In jail, they opened wounds in the mouth and knocked out his upper teeth with a gun butt. They later beat him into unconsciousness.

Eleuterio Fernandez: While being transferred to Montevideo, every time his head wounds would stop bleeding, the "Metros" in charge of him would scratch them open with their fingers, then clean their hands on his clothes.

It should be noted that both in scratching open the wounds and cleaning their fingers, they exercised meticulous thoroughness.

#### French-Italian Bank Operation

One of the objectives of the Pando Operation, among other things, was to upgrade the organization's finances, in an acute crisis at the time. When that operation failed in October, the Movement was down to its last pesos by the end of the year. After analyzing several ways to overcome the crisis, the French and Italian Bank was chosen for three main reasons: 1 -- It was a foreign and consequently strong bank and at least 60 million pesos could be obtained. 2 -- Documents could be seized proving the fraudulent maneuvers used to try to absorb a national bank, the Rio Negro Bank, at a time when the government was bragging about an alleged nationalization of banking which, it was claimed, would begin with the French and Italian Bank. 3 -- It would also result in documents proving that nearly a year after the government resolution requiring that the financial institutions be shut down, half a dozen of them continued to enjoy sound health and a good appetite.

#### Study and Plan

Having decided on the operation, the information department was asked to provide all the material it had on the bank, its finances and the names of officials, with names, addresses, telephone numbers, vehicle registration numbers, and so on, and the study began. On the one hand, investigations confirmed the information and resulted in a knowledge of the habits, daily activities and places frequented by bank officials. In addition, male and female comrades took turns for 20 days observing inside the bank, from the time it opened until it closed. At times, they even arrived at the last minute in order to take advantage of the period of time the bank, after closing hours, would devote to public still inside, which time averaged about a half hour. Such observations resulted in a total survey of personnel and duties, as well as the inside layout, alarm systems, guards, and the average time the public was out after the bank closed.

It was also observed that the senior accountant, Fernandez Susena, always had one of the keys to the vault, while the other two were entrusted to the officers on duty.

The plan was worked out on the basis of the elements gathered together. A tea and pastry shop would be contracted and when its employees arrived at the appointed delivery place -- probably numbering two -- they would be taken into custody. Then, replaced in the vehicle by comrades wearing the employees' uniforms, the other members of the team would be picked up and arrive at the bank at approximately 1930 hours. Although the bank closed at 1700 hours, personnel must work until rather late. At the end of the year, no attention would be attracted by the arrival of a "gift" from some "grateful customer." The doorman would unhesitatingly open up to a uniformed employee bringing sweets, bottles of cider, and so on. Although getting in the door is half the battle, the other half would pose its problems and those problems would have to be solved.

Special attention was paid to the vehicle chosen: It would be a large team: eight male comrades and two female, and the things to get out of the bank: bags of money and documents, would be substantial. It would be necessary to have a large-capacity vehicle such as the delivery truck of a pastry shop.

On the afternoon of 24 December 1969, the pastry shop was telephoned and service for 26 December was requested. The shop explained that it was impossible because it already had a full schedule. This was a major problem: Only 48 hours away from the operation, including a holiday, the proper vehicle had not yet been obtained.

Once the situation was analyzed, the conclusion was reached that the best way to get a suitable vehicle for the appointed time was by buying one.

On 26 December in the morning, a purchase was made. With poor economic possibilities and little time, without being able to be very choosy, an open truck had to be taken, without a tarp, and in addition, the bed of the truck was in poor condition. The 750,000 pesos it cost left the treasury practically empty. According to the plan, by nightfall it would be overflowing. The 750,000 spent would bring in 60 million. But since the bundles of money and documents could not be moved around in the open, a tarp would have to be purchased to cover the back.

Since the pastry shop van was not available, it was necessary to modify plans for entering the bank: lacking pastries, a bomb.

A half hour before the time set to pick up the members of the team in different places, the patched up tarp came apart. Then came the hassle and problems of the comrades in their race against the clock to fix the cover and pick up those waiting on time.

#### Bomb

A few blocks before reaching the bank, a few comrades got out in order to continue under their own steam. With four occupants, the pickup parked in the middle of the street opposite the door used by bank personnel to leave. Another comrade stood guard nearby. Two comrades stood talking on the corner. The remaining three pretended to be waiting for the bus at the bus stop, on the street corner. At this point, an acquaintance of one of them chanced by and as soon as he saw him, stopped to talk. "How are you? What are you doing? What bus are you taking? I get it down there." The man just would not leave! The comrades sweated it out, and he finally left.

At 1940 hours, 5 minutes after the police guard would leave the bank, a "messenger" rang the doorbell, a routine occurrence. Simultaneously, three comrades from the truck and two on foot moved to the door. Halfway there, another chance incident: The contact lens of one of the comrades moved and he had to stop a minute to fix it.

While the doorman took care of the messenger, six cops arrived. The private agents explained that a report had been received of a bomb in the bank and

that they had come to investigate it. They lost no time: When they saw the suspicious face of the messenger, they marched inside with him and the doorman. Undoubtedly worried about the bomb and without the doorman realizing it, they "forgot" about the suspicious messenger in the entryway, who would now prevent anyone from trying to leave.

One comrade remained in the pickup and the two women comrades continued talking on the corner. At this point, the "head of the detectives and a subordinate," led by the doorman, went to the first floor with the manager. The others remained on the ground floor holding the bank employees.

The former, as pleasant as stewardesses, asked how many would fit into the manager's office. The rest went back to the ground floor and were asked not to touch anything, that anything could be dangerous. Some grew nervous, but most remained calm.

Down below, anyone wishing to leave was asked to remain calm and persuaded to stay: "Until the chief comes back down, no one can leave." But one, impervious to any pleasant treatment, tried to leave, invoking his position: "I am Manager Berri." "And I am Officer Caramastrillo!" the cop responded, adding: "No one leaves here."

At this point, the two female comrades entered. When all were together on the ground floor -- some 30 persons -- the "chief" explained:

"Very good, ladies and gentlemen. That business about a bomb was a joke," he said, as the employees uttered a sigh of relief. "But it is not a joke that we are Tupamaros and we have come to take your money and a few documents."

A secretary fainted, but most remained calm. One of the female comrades took care of the fainting victim, who rapidly came to. The other guarded the switchboard operator, who continued to answer by saying what she was told.

Once all those present had been frisked for weapons, documents were requested and checked off a list of "sheep" published by the union after the bank dispute that had just ended. Putting them into a separate group, they were reproached for their reprehensible conduct during the dispute.

Two comrades went to the vault, accompanied by Fernandez Susena. Although the latter opened it with a key, he said that the other two were kept by Baracco, the shift supervisor who had already left.

Since the possibility that at the time of the robbery some key official might have left had been anticipated, the way to overcome the problem was also planned.

It was decided to go get Baracco at his house, but the accountant said it would be difficult to find him there because he knew the man was to attend a dinner at the Club Espanol at 2100 hours.

Since it was 1955 hours already, they would have to wait until 2030 hours.

In the meantime, the comrades had to solve the problem of the documents.

Seated on a footstool among the bank employees in custody was Vazquez Diaz, the director of the bank's financial institutions, who saw that he was being pointed out by a female comrade and lowered his head, like a condemned man waiting for the firing squad. Perhaps something more than his guilt was bothering him; perhaps the idea of his possible kidnaping, the idea of spending time in a revolutionary jail, was eating away at him. Still fresh in his mind was the episode involving his boss, Pellegrini Giampietro, who spent over 70 days there, as long as the bank dispute lasted.

A comrade approached him: "Are you Vazquez Diaz? Come with me."

The man obeyed and explained as he went along: "Is it because of the financial institutions? That is fine. I am also a man of the people."

His fright nearly caused him to say he was a Tupamaro.

With the documents in front of him and realizing that he would pay dearly for any deceit, Tazquez helped and led the comrades to the most important documents, which went into the bags.

Perhaps he thought that he too would be "bagged," because all the information he gave was absolutely correct.

At 2030 hours, when over 10 bags were filled with documents -- including papers on the Rio Negro Bank, two comrades went to get Baracco. They went in the pickup, whose driver would tell the comrades waiting in the getaway cars in different places what was happening.

Baracco, who had still not reached the club, was in a nearby cafe. After the comrades waited a while, he appeared. They identified themselves as police officers and said that Manager Berri had apparently committed suicide, although they did not rule out the possibility of foul play.

Instructing him to be discreet, they asked him for the keys, since it would be necessary to get letters left by the deceased out of the vault. Overcome by surprise, he answered that he did not have them and explained the situation: On Monday, he and Brunetto were to exchange places as supervisor but that they had moved up the switch by three days and exchanged the keys. But "everything can be arranged immediately."

Baracco telephoned Brunetto and he and the two comrade-cops went to his house, driven by a fourth man who did them the favor of giving them a ride. Along the way, it became inevitable to "philosophize" about suicides. In the course of the discussion, Baracco came to the conclusion that Berri had committed suicide because he was an incompetent. So convinced was he of the suicide, so dead did he envision the manager that no fault was left that he did not heap on him!

Arriving at Brunetto's house, they explained the situation and asked him to accompany them to the bank with the keys.

He did not resist, but since his wife was very jealous, he asked for identification from the police to show her that he was not using a trick to get out of the house. Apparently the man was an expert in pulling such tricks on his poor wife!

The cops returned to the bank with Brunetto, but left Baracco and the driver, who went off to the dinner, instructed to exercise the greatest discretion.

Upon entering the bank at nearly 2200 hours, Brunetto nearly fainted when he saw 15 bags of documents piled up in the hall, but he resigned himself when his comrades told him what was going on. While looking for the keys, the accountant became convinced that by wasting time, he was not going to foil the operation and therefore opted for saying he had a duplicate of the key that would open the access door to the vault, although a third key was missing, that to the cashbox itself. The comrades could not open the safe, even though they did get into the vault. After futile efforts with iron bars, they resolved to wait.

They were still waiting when the "chief" arrived. Although he was surprised to see the vault open, even greater was his smugness as he approached the safe, key in hand. Another surprise awaited him: a big key for a little lock!

"What's this?" he asked, looking at the accountant and Brunetto, showing them the huge key.

The second answered with another question: "What do you mean? Where is Font?"

The key Brunetto had was the duplicate of the second given by the accountant. The other, to the safe, had been left with Font and it was therefore presumed that he would there with the others. This explained his question.

By this time, it was 2230 hours. It was impossible to go look for the key, nor could the employees be held any longer, especially Berri, a dinner for whom was being held at 2300 hours. His wife was already looking for him. At 2000 hours, she had phoned and been given the answer that he had left. She had later come to the bank in person and the doorman repeated the reply.

Under these circumstances, it was decided to evacuate. The comrades were both disappointed and furious: Three hours in the bank meaning 15 bags of documents but not a single cent!

#### Navy Training Center Operation

The CIM [Naval Training Center] is located on the corner of the beginning of the Rambla Portuaria and the easternmost point of the Port of Montevideo. Before it is the city; beyond the bay. In order to enter or leave, one must either cross the city or approach it by the coastal avenue. Carrying out an operation at the CIM is to work in the lion's mouth.

The Training Center thus occupies almost a whole block bordered by Juan Lindolfo Cuestas in the east, Washington in the north and the Rambla in the west. In



the south, the Beacon and Buoy Department occupies a narrow strip along Calle Sarandi.

It is an old one-storey building with a second floor in some areas. On the Washington side, about 5 meters from J. L. Cuestas, the only door is located and at the other end of the block, a few meters from the Rambla, a gate for vehicles is found.

Based on information given from the inside by comrade Fernando Garin, who occupied an orderly post, the action was planned.

The six guards would have to be taken prisoner: two outside, on the corner of Cuestas and Washington, one of them on the sidewalk and the other on the roof. The remaining four would be inside: a corporal and an orderly in the Guard Room, not counting a second orderly who would be Garin himself; a barracks guard in the troop dormitory and a noncommissioned officer in the Officers Club, where the entertainment is television.

The other personnel would be sleeping in other places in addition to the barracks: Radio Office, Arsenal, Sickbay and jails. There might also be a few men playing cards in the Enlisted Men's Club.

The action would involve 20 male and 2 female comrades, a car and a truck.

29 May 1970

At 1300 hours, Garin was telephoned to see if there was any news. Everything was going smoothly. At 1700 hours, another call was made and the same answer given. On two previous opportunities, the operation had had to be suspended because of incidents at the target.

At 0110 hours in the morning on 30 May, Garin was contacted for the last time, confirming the action for 0145 hours.

While one comrade was phoning from a bar, the truck was parked in the neighborhood. A team of "lovers" occupied the cab, while the bed, covered by a tarp, apparently contained boxes, crates, vegetables, food and miscellaneous thing, plus 17 persons!

While awaiting the return of the comrade, a policeman approached the cab and asked the couple for identification. Under the tarp, 17 guns were aiming at the untimely visitor. Either from fatigue or drunkenness -- the latter more than the former -- the officer leaned on the railing -- at least that was his intention. He actually leaned on the arm of a comrade who remained as immobile as possible. Fortunately, the man could not distinguish between wood and flesh. The couple provided the documents, he looked at them, returned them and went on his way. The tarp was filled with the sigh of relief uttered by the comrades. If they had had to confront the cop, the 17 comrades piled into the truckbed would have been ready to shoot him, but it would have been a disaster. Nevertheless, the booze fixed everything. And something was learned.

On the other end, Garin discovered at the barracks that his weapon would not work. Resorting to a trick, he killed two birds with one stone: Pretending to play a trick on the corporal on guard, he took his weapon and left his own in its place.

With execution of the operation confirmed, the truck and a car headed for the CIM at the appointed hour and using different routes. Three comrades would act as investigative officers during the first phase.

The truck stopped on Cuestas between Sarandi and Reconquista, a block and a half from Cuestas and Washington. On the left was a soccer field. About 10 meters ahead, the couple returned to its lovemaking, but with one eye on the "police car" that had parked on Sarandi a few meters from Cuestas. Tino got out, made it to the corner and waited for Garin to give him the signal previously agreed upon. But he saw only the guard on the rooftop, no Garin. The seconds grew long, Tina waited, those in the car and the truck waited, as did the couple. All were impatient and nervous.

It was a foggy morning. Nearby, amidst the sounds of sticks and tacks falling on the floor in the heavy silence of the sleeping dormitory, a garbage truck passed.

After a minute, Garin appeared on the sidewalk on Cuestas, pretending to contemplate the weather and hugging the wall in order not to be seen by the guard on the rooftop -- the other is on Washington -- threw his helmet in the air and caught it. That was the signal.

Tino's car now drove toward the target and parked at the corner. The two coppers getting out were intercepted by the guard. From the rooftop, one could hear the other guard cocking his R-15 rifle. Identifying themselves as investigative police, the comrades asked to talk with the officer on guard. The guard carrying the message returned with an orderly and regained his post.

The orderly was none other than Garin. The cops repeated that they had to talk with the officer on guard because a sailor had had problems with the police. Garin asked for their identification, which he examined at length under the attentive surveillance of the two guards.

"Convinced" of the authenticity of the documents, the orderly then told them to go in. After passing a kind of hallway and a small waiting room, they reached the main waiting room where they stayed.

Garin then went to the Guard Office, where there was a telephone and an alarm button. He roused the corporal and told him to help the cops, saying that "this is something for you to handle." After seeing the documents and hearing the explanations, the corporal went to get the noncommissioned officer on guard watching TV in the Officers Club next to the room.

When the corporal returned with the other officer, the cops once again explained their problem. In the waiting room, Garin talked with the orderly. The cops were carefully observing their interlocutors and finally, after beating around the bush for a time, Garin disarmed the orderly and the two

cops did the same with the corporal and noncommissioned officer. In surprise and fright, the three remained next to the wall, unarmed and their hands over their heads.

Things were going on outside as well. Only seconds after the cops had entered the barracks, the couple, arms around each other, walked slowly toward the car on the sidewalk. A "cop" confronts them, asking for identification, looking at them inquisitively, questioning them: "What are you doing here at this hour? Where do you live? Where do you work?" The couple protested, arguing loudly, while the guards heard and saw everything from their stations. Finally, the woman said she was a student at the IAVA [Alfredo Vasquez Acevedo Institute].

"So you are a student and a student at the IAVA!" exclaims the cop, adding authoritatively: "You wait here. We are going to fix this with the officer when he comes!"

Although the couple protested, they stayed. For their part, the guards remained watching the scene. The guard on the rooftop quit watching when Garin approached, saying he was coming to relieve him. Surprised, the guard argued that it was not yet time. As he approached, Garin explained that the police had come to get him and that he would have to go with them. When next to the guard, Garin aimed his weapon at him, but the man resisted, refusing to hand over his gun and struggling with him. He did not surrender until he felt Garin's gun at his temple. Garin, the R-15 in his power, aimed at the guard below and shouted for him not to move, placing the prisoner in the same line of fire. Simultaneously, the couple and the cop jumped him. He also resisted and although he struggled and tried to hold onto the M-1, he finally surrendered.

When the couple and the cop left the car to take the guard prisoner, the truck drove to the target rapidly. When almost on top of it, it abruptly stopped. The comrade driving had seen a sentinel who looked real to him. Acting extremely quickly, in 10 seconds, he had taken the guard prisoner and a comrade took his place. The transformation was achieved -- and would be achieved with other comrades -- adding only a sailor's helmet to the grey pants and shirt.

Still skidding because of the rapid halt, the driver saw the barriers blocking pedestrian traffic on Washington raised and entered, parking opposite the gate. The 17 comrades got out and went straight in, each one with a specific task.

Lacho went up onto the roof to replace Garin. Another comrade was to relieve the guard, but was delayed, meaning that Lacho, dragging himself along the ground in order not to be seen from the street, aimed at the guard and kept him at his post merely as a "silhouette." The delayed comrade arrived and took up the guard post with the cape and helmet of the prisoner. The latter went back down with Lacho, who took him with the others to the Officers Club where two comrades would guard them.

The comrades then quickly and simultaneously took those in the different offices and rooms into custody.

In the officers' dormitory on the second floor, the guard, who had been sleeping since being relieved, was taken prisoner. In the diving section on the first floor, two more were taken and in the corporal's dormitory on the second floor, three were found. Six more were taken in the sickbay. It should be noted that the "sickbay" is that in name only, being nothing more than a dormitory housing persons in perfect health.

In the recruits dormitory, six more were taken. Frightened and worried, they protested: "We are just recruits, we have nothing to do with it, we are just recruits."

Who knows what was going through the heads of those poor sailors! Two comrades went to the Arsenal, whose door was blocked and held shut by something heavy. When they kicked it open, it made considerable noise, although the nightmare of the two sailors sleeping there naked had to be much worse. The comrades shook them awake and while one trembled, the other was so drunk he could not talk clearly. They joked and laughed with the comrade who remained there guarding them, gave him a cigarette and would once in a while tease the trembling prisoner.

"Don't stand there shaking, stupid! Don't be an ass. They're not going to do anything to us. Have a cigarette, put your hands down," and, to the comrade, "He can put them down, right?"

Even though the comrade said he could, the poor unfortunate kept his hands up. Perhaps he thought he was a dead man if he put them down.

So it went for 15 minutes, while his comrade talked himself hoarse.

38 and a Trick

In the Enlisted Men's Club on the ground floor, a comrade knocked on a door locked from the inside. After a few seconds, someone answered: "What's going on?"

"It is the guard," he answered.

When the door was opened, he aimed at the man behind it and, cautioning him to keep quiet, made him walk in front toward a section of the club where three others were waiting in order to continue playing pool. They walked down the hallway formed by a wooden divider and a wall, arriving where the others were waiting impatiently. Pushing the man in front of him to one side, he stood aiming at the table and said, in a tone in keeping with the situation: "This time I win. I have 38 and we are Tupamaros."

And all he had was a 38 long!

The pool players put down their cues and stood against the wall with their hands over their heads. Although frightened, one of them still retained his

sense of humor and asked the man at his side: "Hey, is it cold enough for my legs to be shaking this way?"

The enlisted men's dormitory actually had two floors, with about six bunks on each level arranged in two lines. Between them the length of the room were the lockers.

Using an excuse, Garin took the barracks master standing guard on the first floor inside the door outside. When a few meters away, he kept his gun on him and turned him over to Lacho. With his M-1 clutched close to his chest, the man tried to resist having his weapon taken away. Deaf to the threats of the comrade, he held on and struggled. Lacho finally yanked the rifle out of his hands, following which he marched off to the Officers Club where guards, the corporal, orderly, officer and noncommissioned officer were being held. (When these would be taken to the Plaza de Armas, the patio framed by the buildings being taken, the other prisoners would join them.)

Once the door was open, ten comrades entered, five for each dormitory, in single file. Downstairs they waited to go into action when the light upstairs was lit. Although it finally came on, the men downstairs could not find the keys and had to do the best they could with the reflection.

In each dormitory was a comrade at the end of the row of lockers, thus guarding the two lines of bunks and blocking the exit. In the upstairs dormitory, access to the weapons rack was also guarded -- the place each sailor left "his" weapon when going off duty. Two more in each section were in charge of the very frightened sailors. While one stood guard with a rifle, the other would tie their hands with copper wire. A few had to be pulled out of their bunks, one especially furnishing more work. Although they pulled and pulled, they could get him out so far but no farther: His body would come out but his arm would stay. What was wrong? The man had a hurt hand and had tied it to the upper bunk "to keep the blood from rushing to it," which exempted him from having his hands tied.

There were some 24 prisoners here, plus the two from the diving section.

#### Nightmare

In the Radio Office on the lower floor, there was only one man, in a deep sleep. After much shaking, a comrade managed to awaken him.

"Let's go, get up, we are Tupamaros," he said, pointing his gun at him.

"You go ahead, let me sleep," answered the man half asleep, arranging his pillow once more.

"Let's go, out fast, we can't waste time," and the comrade pulled off his blankets and shook him.

"Are you crazy? This is no time for jokes! Go to hell!" he replied, turning over again and covering his head. The comrade had no choice but to put down

his weapon and pull him out of bed. They were the last to reach the parade ground. When he saw the others, the last man realized it was not a joke and muttered: "Why does this happen to me when I have just six months to go?"

The total number of prisoners was 53, plus one man from the brig, eight arriving from the street and one more who appeared when and how we shall see.

Grouped together on the parade grounds, all were in their underclothes except for ten. They were not allowed to dress in order to prevent risky movements. A blanket was given to a man who was coughing. Another complained: "Wouldn't you know it, when I have liberty tomorrow!"

Before taking them to the cells, Garin harangued them, reminding them that in that very place, the UTE workers had been subjected to inhuman treatment, mistreated, insulted in word and deed. He said it was a shame that many of the officers and enlisted men who were guilty of the worst conduct were not there, for they had been the harshest with the workers. But, Garin continued, "some of them are present," causing more than one stomach to turn over. Looking at those to whom he referred, he said, "Do you remember? And you? And you?"

The plan was to shut the prisoners up in three cells on the second floor, but the door of one was broken, the other was being repaired and the third, where a man was being held prisoner, was not large enough. Most had to stay in the hall, on the second floor next to the cells, and on the stairway. Two women and one male comrade stood guard. With the inability to move, the prisoners began to feel the morning cold and blankets had to be brought for those without clothing. Some lay down on the floor and went back to sleep. Among them, perhaps, was the man from the Radio Office, if he did not lose sleep thinking about retirement!

Most of the prisoners were in custody by 0220 hours, the action having begun at about 0150 hours.

#### To Arms

With the prisoners in custody, the truck entered, parked next to the arsenal and began to load. With lightning speed, crates and crates of short and long weapons, munitions, and so on, went into the truck.

At the same time, other comrades tried to start a navy truck in the yard. Unable to do so, they looked for the driver among the prisoners, who explained that although the vehicle ran well, the battery was low. They got it started by pushing it and took it to help load the booty.

At the same time, the comrades waiting in a specific place with the vehicle were called by phone from the Guard Office. (With the barracks taken, it was the best and safest place.) No more vehicles had been planned for because the comrades had a navy truck, but the previous afternoon, they had taken it to be repaired. The load thus had to be distributed among three vehicles instead of four, along with the men.



As the minutes passed, the load continued to grow. The arsenal gradually became deserted, while the vehicle tires were flattened by the weight.

In the meantime, the guards took charge of sailors coming in from the street from time to time to go to bed. The solitary sidewalks and the early morning silence gave their steps away long before they arrived. They saluted the sentry and went straight in, to the Guard Office where the "seaman and the orderly" one after the other took eight men dreaming about a warm bed prisoner. The fourth or fifth sailor began to joke. Very casual in body and spirit, heading straight for the door, he said to the sentry as he went by, "Hi! How are you? Is the seaman crazy?" "No, he's terrific today," the sentry replied.

Approaching the Guard Office, he indeed saw that the sentry was not lying. The seaman was in fine shape and ready for jokes, so that he aimed his gun at him and made him put his hands in the air. But it was a joke and a half. With a quick movement and without stopping, he pretended to take out a gun and, aiming with his hand, pulled the trigger with sound: "Bang, bang, bang."

And so it went. The seaman had to go after him and convince him that although he was not in a bad mood, he was not in the mood for jokes either.

Having shown their pass, the comrades in the vehicle summoned entered and proceeded to the Radio Office on the second floor, then to a storage area and finally, to the diving section.

From the arsenal, the navy truck went to the enlisted men's dormitory on the second floor, where the weapons rack was emptied. Having completed this task, two comrades went to the lower dormitory to look for blankets to cover their load. Upon entering, they saw a guy coming out from under a bunk with his hands up. He was a sailor who, taking advantage of the darkness when the others were taken prisoner, managed to hide. Then he went to the weapons rack and took an M-1 rifle which he loaded and...there he was on the floor.

One detail, the slightest detail forgotten -- the location of the keys to the lights -- could have complicated and even ruined an action planned down to the last detail and already practically completed in the most complex and riskiest phase: taking the guards and other personnel into custody. Fortunately, the man under the bunk saw that things were serious and hesitated, took too much time to make his decision.

By 0330 hours, everything was loaded.

The plan provided for leaving and covering a specific distance as a convoy, then separating and heading for unloading points. The convoy would be led by the naval pickup, with six uniformed comrades providing an innocent front.

Not having the pickup meant the plan had to be modified. Six or seven unarmed comrades, with their documents in order, left to take a bus about three blocks away, watched by the sentry on the rooftop.

Carrying 10 or 11 comrades, the three vehicles left by different routes and headed for the spots where they were to unload. The booty would then be divided up among the columns, which in turn would pass it on to cantons and comrades. Six comrades stayed at the barracks and would leave in the cop car 40 minutes later, at 0410 hours, so that when the alarm was sounded, everyone would be clear, leaving not a trace.

Those comrades would make the most of the last 40 minutes. While three remained on the sidewalk, rooftop and Guard Office, another would guard the prisoners and the remaining two could paint slogans -- including "Indalecio Olivera Da Rosa Commando," a comrade who died in action -- on the walls and take pictures of the empty arsenal, the MLN banner on the parade ground flagstaff and of the prisoners through the gate situated at the foot of the stairway leading to the cells.

When they left, the comrades cut the telephone wires and closed the street gate, leaving behind a fake bomb with a sign reading "The people were here!"

After unloading, the navy truck had to travel several kilometers and be left in a place that would put the forces of repression off the track. Getting in to drive, comrade Fernan Pucurull, a key to the planning, organization and execution of the operation, exclaimed smiling:

"Now that everything is done, if we have to face the bullets, I would do it happily. I don't care if I die."

And he left. Two days later, he would die just as we described in another chapter of this book.

Comrade Pucurull's phrases reflect his clear awareness that with that massive arms operation, the ratio of forces between the repression and the People's Army would undergo a fundamental shift.

The weapons seized included: 190 Springfields; 120 Garland M-1's (heavy rifles with great firepower and range); 50 45-caliber pistols; 180 38-long rifles, long barrel, unused; 2 machine guns with tripods, one of them in very poor condition, recovered a few months later by the police from a canton; 6 R-15 rifles (the type used by the Yankees in Vietnam); 2 Reissing 45-caliber machine guns; 90 demolition grenades; 130 gas and teargas grenades; 70,000 shells for short and long weapons (most, about 60,000, of the former type).

The rest of the load included radios, both portable and stationary, gas masks, diving equipment and materials, shovels and a pickax, plus collectors' weapons that the government "confiscated" in order to keep them out of the hands of terrorists, expropriating them house by house. The barracks and the sailors were left behind, minus one who went underground.

## Epilogue

There are certain features characteristic of urban guerrillas that affect their organizational makeup and methods of action. The principal one is perhaps the geographic and military relationship between the guerrillas and the enemy -- in other words, the terrain on which the struggle is waged.

Unlike guerrillas who move about in space, which, in addition to being favorable is vast, urban guerrillas must be confined to a rather limited space that at the same time is always saturated with repressive forces.

From an exclusively military standpoint, urban guerrillas are in a situation similar to that of the forward outposts of a conventional army infiltrating enemy territory. All of these factors comprise a precarious situation for the establishment of guerrilla forces, but at the same time, a privileged situation with respect to launching attacks.

Urban guerrillas do not use uniforms or identification symbols, except in very special cases and almost always for brief periods of time, and this is an obvious defense mechanism -- although also used in attacks -- that clearly expresses their special situation.

These features influence many organizational measures and the main tactical aspects as we shall see.

With respect to organization, they must face the most serious phenomenon, consisting of the high percentage of casualties. No matter how many precautions are taken, no matter how high the quality of the work, the number of casualties may be lowered, but whenever the forces of repression do their work properly, the percentage of losses will be high, compared with other spheres and other forms of struggle. This problem demands a series of measures to overcome it.

Compartmentalization: This is the main defense tool of the organization. It is a vital necessity; without it, urban guerrilla warfare is impossible. One can compare the importance of this single measure to urban guerrilla warfare to the importance of mobility and sentries to rural guerrilla warfare.

Every group must be separate from the rest, every sector of organization from the others, every comrade from his fellow comrades. It is taboo to know or give out the real names of guerrilla soldiers, their homes, organizational places. Every comrade, every group, every sector must know only what is indispensable in order to work and nothing more. Compartmentalization must also naturally govern leadership organizations, but the opposite as well. In order to make decisions, a leadership organization has no reason to know rank-and-file members or their headquarters, homes, and so on. It may even be unaware of the meeting place of the organization itself. It often occurs that comrades in leadership positions or even entire organs are taken blindfolded to specific meeting places!

It can be said today that in the MLN, no leadership organization taken separately -- all organs operate without direct connections -- even if it is the

highest, knows more than a minimum part of the organization, meaning names, addresses, location of headquarters, and so on. Obviously, this is even truer if one considers each member of such organs separately, although they work together.

In short, the object is for no one to be able to provide the enemy, even under the worst possible circumstances, with decisive information. This is valid for isolated comrades as well as entire rank-and-file or leadership organs.

Obviously, compartmentalization makes immediate-range operations slower, but in the long range, speeds them up in that it wards off blows from the enemy. From other organizations, we have synthesized the following experience: Although at first glance it would appear that compartmentalization is a great impediment to operations, it fortunately turns out that this is not so. Gradually, once the organization is adapted to the system, it operates with complete fluidity.

Initial secrecy concerning the very existence of the guerrilla force is vital at the beginning of the struggle. Like any guerrilla warfare, that conducted in urban areas is extremely vulnerable at the outset. Experience indicates that most attempts to organize the struggle are wiped out in this early stage. Consequently, the greater the secrecy -- ideally it would be total -- the more time will be gained in warding off early repressive strikes deriving from initial battles. Once a minimum organization is consolidated, once minimum experience has been gained, once minimum ties have been established with the people, then guerrillas can withstand the heaviest attacks without serious risk.

Recruiting: As a counterpart to the high percentage of casualties, the city offers the possibility of good recruiting as soon as the guerrillas achieve their first victories. Recruiting must be organized so that, being both aggressive and productive, it will more than make up for the losses that necessarily occur. An organizational network will be set up that will surround the central core of the guerrilla force, which will in turn heighten the latter's ties with the social sectors most affected and second, with the people as a whole. At the same time, this network is a link from and to the guerrillas. It provides protection, is the source of supplies, recruitment, and so on. It is obvious that, if the guerrillas have a correct line and if their work is successful, then they will enjoy growing support, even considering the fact that not all those interested can be soldiers or members of the central nucleus. On the contrary, it is perfectly logical for there to exist different levels of commitment and different possibilities of cooperation. That reality also leads to the need for the network in question and it is absolutely essential to take maximum advantage of the different forms of support available.

Reserves: The available forces must never be risked all at once. In addition, it is necessary to keep entire sectors of the organization out of compromising work, in addition to key departments, whenever the degree of development attained so permits. In other words, at a given level in the process, and especially if the process has been successful, the conditions might exist to

keep entire groups in reserve. This may even be required when the atmosphere in which we revolve or the conditions do not allow for excessive underground activity -- in other words, when the terrain is saturated.

Repetition of organs of the movement, so that even if most of them should be destroyed, the rest can carry on the struggle. For that purpose, the MLN is divided into columns. The purpose is that given any unfavorable circumstance that might occur, any column can take responsibility for the movement. That is why the different mechanisms exist: recruiting organization, information with the necessary peripheral ties; military setup; technical services; intermediate leadership organs in which different comrades learn to perform such duties.

Leadership: As in all other areas, leadership duties in the urban guerrilla forces involve a hierarchy. Every comrade must be ready to pick up the torch and be able to pass it on without risk to the organization if it should fall. The organization must therefore be prepared at all levels. There can be no technical secrets entrusted to a single person. There can be no irreplaceable comrades or organs. That is the premise for the duplication of organs and functions. When a new discovery is made in tactics, the workshops or organizations, that contribution must be spread and applied throughout the movement simultaneously.

For those same reasons, the leadership organs at all levels must be collegial. This is vital to the existence of the MLN.

Likewise, there must be a system of automatic substitution for all comrades in key posts. Such alternates should be informed of essential affairs in order to be able to take over without any major problem should the circumstance arise.

The organizational framework must not be a truncated pyramid, but rather, several pyramids of the same type so that each one is an organization but on a smaller scale.

Material infrastructure: What in rural guerrilla warfare is provided by friendly geography must be patiently constructed in urban guerrilla warfare: places to eat and sleep with some tranquillity, places to take care of the wounded, meeting places, spaces for workshops, storage, and so on.

The visible portion of the urban guerrilla struggle that becomes public on the occasion of spectacular victories or defeats, that part is minimal compared with the silent, difficult struggle waged at all hours of the day and night to maintain connections, find hiding places, bring people together, make a workshop operate, and so on. We can say without exaggeration that the vast majority of our energies are consumed in that constant battle. In order for a group of ten comrades to carry out a victorious or thwarted action, an action lasting a few minutes, many members, countless members, have worked quietly for days, weeks, months.

Nor is that all: That infrastructure must be disguised. Enormous energy and means are consumed in that task.

Concealment is inherent in the urban struggle. It is an essential recourse, in order to ensure their protection, of militants, vehicles, weapons, premises, absolutely everything.

When the struggle is carried further, one must inexorably resort to all kinds of hide-and-seek, whether with respect to materials or comrades. This in turn results in the mobilization of great resourcefulness and the expenditure of huge amounts of work. From the tiniest hiding places to large wells and tunnels -- depending on the purpose -- these are resources to which one unfailingly has to resort when repression, unleashed in all its fury, constantly swoops down on the entire city.

In short, urban guerrilla warfare implies great daily organizational prowess.

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